

THE MALE EYE AND THE FEMALE IMAGE:
THE INTERRUPTION OF THE VISUAL ENCOUNTER BY
ABSTRACTION IN FOUR MOVIES BY LINA WERTMULLER

BY
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by

Suellyn Winkle

For my grandmother, Katherine Caroline Reynolds

It is yin and yang. Light is the left
hand of darkness. . . . How did it go?
Light, dark. Fear, courage, Cold,
warmth. Female, male . . . both and one.
A shadow on snow.

Ursula K. LeGuin

We may safely assert that the knowledge
that men can acquire of women, even as
they have been and are, without reference
to what they might be, is wretchedly
imperfect and superficial and will always
be so until women themselves have told
all that they have to tell.

John Stuart Mill

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
INTRODUCTION THE SEXUAL DIVISION	1
Notes	12
CHAPTER ONE THE SEDUCTION OF MIMI: BLINDED BY A MASCULINE OBSESSION	13
Notes	34
CHAPTER TWO LOVE AND ANARCHY: THE SEPARATION OF THE WORLDS	35
Notes	57
CHAPTER THREE SWEPT AWAY: MAN AND WOMAN	59
Notes	83
CHAPTER FOUR A NIGHT FULL OF RAIN: HUSBAND AND WIFE	85
Notes	116
FILMOGRAPHY	117
BIBLIOGRAPHY	118
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	124

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The dissertation is a study of the male-female relationship in four movies by Lina Wertmuller: The Seduction of Mimi, Love and Anarchy, Swept Away, and A Night Full of Rain. The title The Male Eye and the Female Image refers to the way in which the female has traditionally been "seen" through the eye of the male. In each of these movies the dominant point of view is the male's; furthermore, in each the male-female relationship is begun by the male eye looking at the female image. What happens as a result of this visual encounter is the subject of this study, or how the male's perception of the female is limited by persistent abstractions based on the sexual division and how this interruption of the values established in the

visual encounter leads ultimately to the failure of the relationship.

In The Seduction of Mimi each of the women is defined by her role in relation to Mimi. Rosalia is his wife, Fiore is his mistress, and Amalia is the wife of Signore Finnocchiaro, the man who seduced his wife. In Love and Anarchy Tripolina and Salome become classified as whores in Tunin's eyes at the moment when he needs to see them most clearly. Rafaella is perceived as a bitch to be tamed in Swept Away, a Woman to be beaten into submission; and in A Night Full of Rain Paolo's passionate desire to behold Lizzie's image wanes when she becomes his wife.

All of the couples in these movies prove incapable of creating and sustaining a fulfilling relationship with a member of the opposite sex. But this failure is more than the failure of marriage or of desire. It is indicative of a wider human failure to imagine oneself in a living, growing, relation with one's fellow beings and one's world that is not distorted by the sexual dichotimization at the heart of the human experience in these movies. The above four movies by Lina Wertmuller illustrate that a new kind of rapport must be forged between male and female in order to create a new moral life between them.

INTRODUCTION
THE SEXUAL DIVISON

The gathering impulse to break loose from our existing gender arrangements, to free ourselves from the fixed symbiotic patterns that have so far prevailed between men and women, is part of the central thrust of our species' life toward more viable forms.

Dorothy Dinnerstein

The scene opens with a dark-haired man chasing a blonde-haired woman over white sand dunes. They are on a deserted island, and from the look of their clothing they have been there some time. The man is yelling curses at the woman in Italian, and she is running away from him. Each time he catches up with her, he yells more curses and slaps her, kicks her, or punches her. She hits him back. She tries to kick him in the groin. She gets up and runs again. He catches up with her and hits her especially hard. She falls.

She says, "Look, I give up!"

He says, "You give up? No, it's too easy that way!"¹ He hits her again. She screams and begs for mercy. He slaps her. She is lying on her stomach. He grabs her and begins to tear off her clothing. She

scrambles and tries desperately to get away. He gets on top of her. He pulls her hair.

"Now we'll start getting a little more intimate!"

"No!"

"Yes . . . I want to rip your tiny perfumed cunt apart. . . . I want to tear you to pieces! You've never known what a man is really like! I'll show you!" (p.231). He is on top of her, kissing her. She is squirming beneath him. He has overpowered her. She submits, but it is not enough for him.

"You've got to fall in love! . . . In love, passionately in love with me. You're already a slave, but you've got to become a slave of love. . . . You're going to slither at my feet like a worm begging for mercy. . . . I've got to be a god for you!"(p.232).

This scene depicts a crucial turning point in the relationship between the two main characters in Lina Wertmuller's movie Swept Away by an Unusual Destiny on the Blue Sea of August and illustrates the relation between male and the female at its most basic level--the physical. When the restraints of class and society are removed, the male (Gennarrino) exerts his power in the most direct way, by physically overpowering the female (Raffaella) and penetrating her body sexually--by raping her. With this act Gennarrino

becomes dominant in their relationship. He even wins Raffaella's love. She becomes, as he wishes, "a slave of love."

Confrontation between males and females is a consistent and integral element of Wertmuller's movies. In order to see clearly what is happening between the sexes in her movies, it helps to be aware of how the sexual division manifests itself in the culture at large. The term "sexual division" refers to the separation of the male and female powers. These powers will be defined in the discussion which follows. This division is based upon gender and results in differences in temperament, responsibility, and power for each sex.

In the scene described above, for example, it is possible for Gennarrino to exert his power over Raffaella because of the physical differences between the male and the female. Although every act of sexual intercourse is not characterized by violence, the power and dominance of the male is a common feature of traditional human sexual interactions. Susan Brownmiller, in her study of rape, Against Our Will, asserts that rape, the threat and fear of rape, is the physical basis for male dominance in the male-female relation:

Man's structural capacity to rape and woman's corresponding structural vulnerability are as basic to the physiology of both our sexes as the primal act of sex itself.²

Raffaella's rape and subsequent submissiveness to and love for Gennarrino also reflect the widely accepted Freudian view of rape: Women are by nature masochistic and are aroused by pain.³ Raffaella, feisty and beautiful, is "asking for it," which is why she loves Gennarrino afterwards. She (unconsciously perhaps) wants to be raped. This hidden and perverse desire is a part of her nature, her temperament as a female of the species, and is thus a consequence of her sex.⁴ The rape scene not only emphasizes the physical basis of the relationship between Raffaella and Gennarrino, but also reflects a common cultural attitude concerning rape and the sexual hierarchy it exemplifies.

The male-female relation, then, rests upon this fundamental distinction--the biological difference between the male and the female. Sex can thus be seen as a gender class, a biological class. As Kate Millett notes in Sexual Politics, males rule females:

Groups who rule by birthright are fast disappearing, yet there remains one ancient and universal scheme for the domination of one birth group by another--the scheme that prevails in the area of sex. . . . What goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged (yet is institutionalized nonetheless) in our social order, is the birthright priority whereby males rule females. . . . However muted its present appearance may be, sexual domination obtains [sic] nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power.⁵

Actual biological differences between males and females are traditionally assumed to be the basis for attendant sex role divisions. According to this theory, for example, men are (on the average) physically stronger than women; therefore, men have assumed the tasks which require strength. On the other hand, women bear children; therefore, women have assumed the tasks associated with raising children. Culturally, however, the sex role divisions have resulted in stereotypes⁶ which go far beyond the assumption of tasks based on physical differences. For example, it is generally accepted as true that men are rational and women are instinctual; that men are active and women are passive; or that men are independent and women are dependent. According to a Sex Role Inventory developed in 1974 by Sandra Bem,⁷ most adults will identify self-reliant, athletic, assertive, dominant, aggressive, and analytical as masculine traits, and yielding, affectionate, flatterable, tender, childlike, and sympathetic as feminine traits. The masculine traits are often summarized as being "instrumental"; the feminine traits as being "expressive."⁸ There is a strong cultural consensus concerning which traits are linked to which sex.

Most importantly, the traits attributed to the male are considered to be the norm. Thus, males are "active" and females, in contrast to this norm, are

"passive." Or, males are "dominant," and, in contrast, females are "submissive." Woman is consistently defined by her relation to man. Simone de Beauvoir points out this asymmetrical feature of the sexual polarity in her landmark study, The Second Sex:

Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him. . . . She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute--she is the Other.⁹

This persistent differentiation illustrates a dichotomy widely recognized as a part of the contemporary cultural malaise--the dissociation of the male and the female powers. Woman, as child-bearer, is associated with the powers of life, with the physical world of cyclical processes and individual relations. Man, on the other hand, is associated with the powers of thought, with the abstract and rational world of classification and analysis. Moreover, the female's alignment with the biological associates her with growth and evolution, while the male's alignment with the intellectual associates him with abstraction and stasis. In other words, the male powers, recognized as the powers of reason, logic, and abstraction (the word), and the female powers, recognized as the powers of intuition, relation, and concreteness (the image), are somehow divided, kept apart, and so

prevented from complementing each other dynamically in a functional and vital union. Thus, the problem from the onset is the failure of the male-female relation, a lack of unity. The consequences are unsuccessful marriage and the divisiveness and the destructiveness resulting from the inability of individuals to joyfully emerge, expand, and move in a polarized universe.

The male-female relation is an important part of Wertmuller's art. In each of the movies to be discussed, the protagonist faces a moral dilemma in a sexual and a social relationship. The sexual relationship consistently undercuts the social relationship--thus emphasizing the importance of the male-female relation in the unfolding of the narrative. The sexual conflict preempts other conflicts within the narrative, revealing time and time again the primal basis of the male-female relation.

Four movies are discussed in this study. My objective is to show, through an examination of the events of the movies themselves, how the male perceives the female and how this perception, when based on abstraction, limits the possibilities of the interaction between the male and female and thus inhibits the potential for the creation of a new kind of relationship.

In each of the movies discussed, the male's perception of the female is limited because of abstractions based on the sexual division. For Mimi, Rosalia is his wife, Fiore is his mistress, and Amalia is the wife of Signore Finnocchiaro, the man who seduced his wife. Each of the women is defined by her role in relation to him. In Love and Anarchy Tripolina and Salome become classified as whores in Tunin's eyes at the moment when he needs to see them most clearly. Rafaella is perceived as a bitch to be tamed in Swept Away, a Woman to be beaten into submission; and Paolo's passionate desire to behold Lizzie's image wanes when she becomes his wife.

The groundwork is laid in The Seduction of Mimi. This early movie is verbally empowered. Except for the brief visual sequence with Fiore which images the possibility of a new relation, it is the story of Mimi, a man of words, in pursuit of his honor. The women exist in the story to either serve or to injure the abstract concept of Mimi's honor.

In Love and Anarchy the dissociation of powers that is verbally present in The Seduction of Mimi is visually apparent in the images of the whorehouse (interior, dimly-lit, intimate space, female-dominated) and the Fascist state which exists outside the whorehouse (exterior, brightly-lit, geometric space, male-dominated). This dichotomy is further carried out in

the human images of Tripolina and Tunin and of Salome and Spotoletti. Tunin and Tripolina are soft, dark, and sensual, while Salome and Spotoletti are blond, bawdy and loud. The movie proceeds with the energy gained from the confrontation of these images. It is pushed forward by the sexual confrontations as well as by the structural contrasts. The dualism is thus both sexual and structural. The institutionalization of the male powers at the expense of the female powers results in Fascism, in the total negation of the individual and Tunin's death as an image. This is the dichotomization carried to its logical conclusion.

After taking the imagination of male domination to its institutionalized limit in Love and Anarchy, in Swept Away Wertmuller bursts forth into the bright daylight and clear blue-green water of the Mediterranean. In this movie she takes male domination in an individual relationship to its limit and then goes beyond to discover new potential for union between the sexes. The conventional signs and stereotypes are left behind in the visual exploration of union made concrete by Rafaella and Gennarrino. But their union is short-lived. Gennarrino pursues his drive toward male identity at the expense of his relationship with Rafaella.

With A Night Full of Rain Wertmuller focuses upon a romantic relationship which results in marriage--the

romantic ideal of contemporary notions of gender arrangements. Whereas in the preceding movies love is seen to be the most life-enhancing choice for the protagonist, in A Night Full of Rain the codification of that relationship limits the potential for union.

The movies are investigated as a series of individual confrontations between male and female and not as evidence of a particular theme or the director's philosophy. Precise phases of the male-female relationship are examined. There are four main aspects considered in the discussion of each movie, although each aspect is not discussed in a separate section. These aspects are 1) the confrontation of the individuals; 2) the quality of their interaction; 3) the degree of congruence between the visual structure and the literary or dramatic structure; and 4) the consequences of the interaction (that is, what has happened to the dichotomy as a result of the interaction and in terms of the potential for a new moral relationship between male and female).

In the course of the above discussion, attention is given to Wertmuller's characterization of the sex roles. How are the sexes seen? What are their visual qualities? What do they do? What happens to them? Furthermore, the dynamics of sexual power operating within the narrative are examined. For example, in Swept Away Gennarrino dominates Raffaella initially

through his superior knowledge of survival skills. As she learns the craft of survival, Raffaella assumes a more nearly equal position with Gennarrino within the frame. She is no longer pictured climbing the hill on which he sits, comfortably shaded, eating his lobster to beg him for scraps of food, or hobbling, cursing, on the rocks below him. She gradually moves to the same horizontal plane that he occupies within the frame, as when they are seated together in the defunct rubber boat on the hill.

This study, then, examines the male-female relation in these four movies by Lina Wertmuller. The title The Male Eye and the Female Image refers to the way in which, as previously mentioned, the female has traditionally been "seen" through the vision of the male. In each of the movies, the dominant point of view is the male's; furthermore, in each case the male-female relationship is begun with the male eye looking at the female image. What happens as a result of this visual encounter is the subject of this study: how the male's perception of the female limits the potential for the relationship between male and female and how the persistent abstractions¹⁰ based upon the sexual division limit and ultimately result in the failure of the relationship.

Notes

¹The Screenplays of Lina Wertmuller, (New York: Quadrangle, 1977), p. 230. All subsequent quotations from Swept Away in the introduction are from this text.

²Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p. 14.

³Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem in Masochism" (1924), Collected Papers (London: Hogarth Press, 1948), II, pp. 155-268.

⁴In the study of the psychology of women, masochism has been assumed traditionally to be a feminine trait. For a discussion of female masochism see Karen Horney, "The Problem of Female Masochism," (1935), Feminine Psychology (New York: Norton, 1967), pp. 214-233.

⁵Kate Millett, Sexual Politics: A Surprising Examination of Society's Most Arbitrary Folly (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1970), pp. 24-25.

⁶According to Gordon Allport (The Nature of Prejudice, Cambridge: Addison Wesley Publishing Co., 1954) a stereotype is "an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category" (p. 187).

⁷Sandra Bem, "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny," Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 42 (1974), pp. 155-162.

⁸R. Colson, "Understanding Women: Implications for Personality Theory and Resources," Journal of Social Issues, 28, No. 2 (1972), pp. 17-32.

⁹The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. xix.

¹⁰"The ultimate facts of immediate actual experience are actual entities. . . . All else is, for our experience, derivative abstraction." Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1929), p. 30. The term "abstraction" shall be used in the above sense in this study.

CHAPTER ONE

BLINDED BY A MASCULINE OBSESSION

In The Seduction of Mimi, the moral dilemma posed by the conflict between the male and female powers is clearly seen in Mimi's relationships with three women: Rosalia, his wife; Fiore, his mistress; and Amalia, the woman he seduces in order to avenge his wounded honor. Woman as image is subordinate to the male perception of the female role: woman as wife and woman as mistress. The female is not seen as an individual, but as part of a system of masculine identity. Because of Mimi's exaggerated sense of honor, symptomatic of his dedication to abstraction, his relationship with each of the three women is unsuccessful. Unable to see himself as an individual existing in a world of living process and valuing himself in terms of social conventions and masculine identity, he is unable to embrace the possibilities of living a more creative and individual existence with the delight of his eye--Fiore.

Mimi's dilemma is illustrated by the conflict between his desire for Fiore and a compulsion to avenge his wounded honor. His connection with Fiore, for example, is uninstitutionalized and based upon a

visual interaction. It commences with the energy gained by his visual apprehension of her image. The scene where he sees her through the traffic on the crowded street and is drawn to her shows that there is the possibility for him to live in a visual connection with his world. He moves toward what delights his eye (Fiore) and pursues her. But when his wife is seduced by Signore Finnocchiario, the abstract idea of honor--of avenging himself--becomes foreground for him. Everything he does henceforth is toward this goal; revenge then becomes the motive for his activity. As a consequence, Fiore is stripped of her colorful clothing, her wools, her art, and becomes a mistress, a person to be hidden and a secret to be kept. She becomes, above all, someone who should not be seen. Mimi's failure to live the life of his eye climaxes in the seduction scene with Signora Finnocchiario (Amalia). When he sees her monumental body, he experiences a visual defeat. He is repulsed by her female flesh, by this vision offered him, which he relentlessly sought.

Mimi's honor, the issue which leads him away from Fiore and towards Amalia, ironically, is based upon his wife's fidelity to him. Simply, Rosalia is Mimi's wife and she has been trespassed upon. The knowledge that another man has "had" his wife and has made her pregnant sends this man who prides himself on being "civilized" exploding from the car in a murderous rage.

It is, as Mimi tearfully says to Rosalia, an insult to his family and to his name. Exactly so. To Mimi, the cinematic individual, a threat to his name (which places him squarely in the verbal tradition) should be less threatening. Moreover, Mimi doesn't even want his wife any more. He is not attracted to her, she gives him no joy, and he will have nothing to do with her, save preserve the empty shell of their marriage. In fact, he has already abandoned her for Fiore. It is only the idea of the marriage that matters; its "live-liness" does not. Yet, he still wants to own Rosalia and feels honor-bound to protect his claim on her.

Mimi's relationship to Rosalia, of course, is based upon the institution of marriage, a religious and social contract:

For the sacrament conjoined in one and the same act two faithful souls, two bodies capable of begetting, and two judicial persons. It was thus a sacrament that made holy the fundamental needs of both the species and the community.¹

The social portion of the contract, furthermore, assures the laws of the patriarchy--that is, that the children who bear the name of the father be sired by him:

Man's historic desire to maintain sole, total and complete access to woman's vagina, as codified by his earliest laws of marriage, sprang from his need to be the sole physical instrument governing impregnation, progeny, and inheritance rights.²

Mimi's honor is grounded in this religious and legal bond which, in turn, is based upon Rosalia's fidelity. Under the laws of marriage, she becomes his; she belongs to him, above all, sexually. And any other male who touches his wife, with or without her desire or consent, thus affronts Mimi:

... the violation was first and foremost a violation of male rights of possession, based on male requirements of virginity, chastity, and consent to private access as the female bargain in the marriage contract.³

Cinematically, of course, the abstract bond of the marriage is not an event. It is not visible, and it is appropriate, therefore, that Rosalia and Mimi are married when the movie begins. (The basis of their union is not made visible.) Furthermore, their interaction, as it is presented visually, bears out the fact that their relationship is based on an abstract unseen bond and not on their own individual and passionate desire to be together and create new life between them. When first presented, they are in bed in a darkened room and the room is filled with other family members sleeping in nearby beds. The relationship is therefore concretely placed within the family unit, a social unit. Mimi is lying on top of Rosalia kissing her. He is trying to make love. But, both their bodies are covered--Mimi and Rosalia are under the blankets and they appear to be wearing full

sets of night clothes as well. Furthermore, Rosalia is lying underneath Mimi and crying because she is ashamed to be making love. She is also anxious because she is afraid the other family members may awaken and see their lovemaking. Although she has a look of "sheer terror," as Mimi tells her, on her face, she is nonetheless submissive to his desire. But Mimi becomes discouraged and angry because Rosalia does not respond to his caresses or initiate any of her own. The physical union between them does not occur.

Dramatically and cinematically, then, their relationship is presented. Mimi and Rosalia are man and wife. They are defined by their roles, and she is seen in relation to him. Primarily, they are social beings, members of a group with established roles to play. Their individuality is not emphasized. Rosalia is a stereotypic "good" woman. She is modest, she is submissive, and she is passive. And in the relationship with the male, she is on the bottom, literally and figuratively. Furthermore, their images are introduced in a darkened room, and their actions are furtive and take place under the covers. Rosalia does not want to be seen. The image is thus subdued, checked, darkened. The abstraction holds the power here.

On the other hand, Mimi's relationship with Fiore is imaged in an entirely different way. He is on the street walking, in motion, in the middle of an active

world. He is, for the moment, free of the bond of his marriage and is carrying on his relationship with his wife, appropriately enough, through letters, a verbal activity. He is in a new place, with a new job, and a new identity. He is free of the familial and institutional ties that bound him in the previously-mentioned scene. He is out in an active world and is on the move himself. Out of this visual field an image becomes foreground for him. It is the face of a woman. She is across the street, sitting at a table smiling, laughing, talking. She is alive and active in the world herself. Significantly, there are no words in this sequence. He stares, and she looks back at him, and in a series of cross-cuts between his eyes and face and her eyes and face the camera moves from mid-shot to close-up. The images are clearly seen and clearly individualized. Mimi and Fiore are making a visual connection. Her image has caught his eye, and he communicates his attraction to her with his look. She responds by looking back at him. Cut. He enters the frame to look at her work and they are in the frame together. In short, he apprehends the image of Fiore's face and is able to respond to it joyously and with delight. He acts. He moves toward her. The male and the female in this case thus confront one another as images and individuals, not as roles and obligations. There is the potential for a different kind of union,

one other than the abstract, institutionalized union of Mimi and Rosalia.

There are, furthermore, other significant contrasts between the two women. Rosalia is dark-haired, whereas Fiore is light-haired. Rosalia is in a darkened room, crying, not wanting to be seen. Fiore is a vivid image out in the world, laughing, displaying her art. She creates bright beautiful pieces of clothing from colorful wools, and eventually Mimi appears dressed in her creations. Her name, moreover, means flower or blossom or bloom, which suggests a new beginning, an unfolding. More importantly, when Mimi attempts to make love to her almost immediately after meeting her, she tells him that she won't make love with him because she doesn't love him and that she will choose the man to make love to when she is ready. She tells him, furthermore, that she has no respect for the sacrament of marriage, and that it doesn't matter to her if he is married or not, and by implication that she is not looking for that kind of bond. She thus rejects his attempt to dominate her sexually, rejects the abstraction and hierarchy of the marriage bond (which institutionalizes the female-male relationship), and asserts her right as an individual living in a world of process to choose her own situation and moment for lovemaking. She is neither passive and submissive, nor confined physically and institutionally. Mimi's

relationship with Fiore thus holds the possibility for a new kind of interaction between the male and the female based upon perception of and delight in the individual image and rejection of the traditional male-female institutionalized hierarchical relationship.

Mimi's confrontation with Amalia, however, negates the possibilities suggested by his visual encounter with Fiore. Mimi's desire for Amalia comes entirely from the realm of abstraction. The impetus is the idea that his honor has been wounded because his property (Rosalia) has been trespassed upon; therefore, he must avenge himself. He plots to seduce the other man's wife (Amalia) in order to repay him in kind. This plan is made entirely in his mind and has nothing at all to do with the female individual involved (Amalia). In fact, he has never seen Amalia when he makes his plan to seduce her. He seduces her solely because of her abstract social position as the wife of the man who seduced his wife. He plots to use her in the service of his revenge.

Mimi's resultant moral failure can be seen clearly when he confronts Amalia sexually for the first time. He wrestles her into a room where he has lured her and has arranged to have available for just this purpose. The next moment he is faced with the consequences of his singleminded pursuit of revenge. He is confronted

with an image which contradicts the contemporary stereotype of female attractiveness, and he suffers a visual defeat: Her image does not delight him. When Mimi sees Amalia's flesh, he becomes dismayed instead of excited. She is massive. Her body exaggerates the female's physical qualities. Her buttocks are huge; her breasts are pendulous. Her body is reminiscent of the ancient fertility goddesses which emphasize the breasts and hips of the female.

Now Amalia is standing beside the bed with her back to Mimi. The camera begins cutting between her flesh and his eyes. She pulls off her dress and is revealed in black underwear. Her voluminous curves are visible to him, and his eyes begin to widen in disbelief. As the camera cuts between her flesh and his eyes, his eyes widen more. His eyes are shot in jerky zoom sequences, as if he can't believe his eyes and so must look again. She looks over her shoulder and seductively growls at him. Finally, she takes off her pants, and from Mimi's viewpoint her marbled buttocks are seen. She turns, now fully naked, and approaches Mimi on the bed. The shot is wide-angle and exaggerates her massiveness and his smallness. He crouches like a frightened rabbit in the far corner of the bed while her body in the foreground dominates the frame. He sees her breasts swinging above him. Suddenly, she falls, crushing him with her flesh. He

has unleashed an elemental female power, and it overwhelms him. He is visually defeated and, for a moment, unmanned.

Mimi, then, has underestimated the power of the image. He has tried to ignore its power, but the image breaks through his rational construct and momentarily blows his mind. Nevertheless, he is so strongly motivated in his quest for revenge that he is able to overcome his aversion to the sight of her and have intercourse. But it is a grotesque union. The words have their way with the images. Such is the traditional power of mind over matter. He does not joyfully interact with a fellow creature; he uses her to serve his revenge. If he had been able to see her as "nude, fat, beautiful as the moon,"⁴ his verbal idea of her image, then there would have been a degree of unity in his action. But he cannot rejoice in her and acts from a divided self, against himself and against her.

It should be noted that she is a powerful image. The camera is drawn to her. It cuts nine times from his face to her flesh. She is full of life, and she passionately reveals herself as an image. (Mimi keeps his underwear on.) She acts with life-enhancing energy and sings with delight. The lack of unity, of moral coherence, in what she does arises from the fact that

she is seduced by his verbal message. The potential is there; but it is not realized.

By examining what happens as a result of these confrontations with the three women, it is possible to see more clearly how the failure of the relationship between the male and the female mirrors the failure to find a new moral relation between the word and the image. In the case of Rosalia, once Mimi is removed from his position on top of her, new possibilities open up in the world for her. With Mimi in the North, removed from her physically, the power of the males in the the household is weakened. There is only the old, cranky father to contend with. When Rosalia begins to enlarge her sphere of activity, the old man does not have the power to stop her. He can only curse. Rosalia takes a job and begins to earn her own money. She purchases a motorbike, gaining mobility, and is no longer pictured solely in the dark house with an unhappy look on her face. She is purposeful and proud of her ability to work in the modern dry cleaning plant and is imaged happily on her motorbike, dressed in bright clothing, and moving easily past the father, the only male authority left in the household, as she zips on her way. With her husband's authority removed, then, Rosalia puts herself in motion. She also takes a lover. This act, which could hold the promise of

moving on and out, unfortunately for Rosalia, Fiore, Amalia, and Mimi, does not. Significantly, the attraction and affair is not pictured within the movie. An abstract (unseen) event thus leads the way back into abstraction for all involved. What is seen is the result of Mimi's knowledge of the interaction--Rosalia again the submissive, crying wife, dressed in traditional black women's clothing, once again confined to the house, weeping and submitting to the authority of the male and to her role.

Fiore also becomes draped in black, assuming a role defined by her position to the male, Mimi. Indications are quickly given that the potential present in Fiore and Mimi's first meeting will not be fulfilled. Fiore, as a result of her sexual relation with Mimi, becomes pregnant. But instead of the child, the new life, bringing the possibility for a new way of living for Fiore and Mimi, it makes Fiore more dependent on Mimi and leads him back into his masculine identity as patriarch. In short, Mimi and Fiore become more like husband and wife. The image of Rosalia out and about in the world, in fact, directly precedes the image of Fiore in bed, pregnant. Fiore visually replaces Rosalia, the wife.

Fiore's pregnancy, in addition, limits her movement. She is imaged inside, confined, asking Mimi for verbal information about what is going on outside. She

is lying in bed with her swollen stomach, and Mimi, instead of relating to her as an individual in the present moment, is talking about the future and his "son." (He never considers the possibility of a daughter.) He is living in his mind, in a future that does not yet exist.

Another, more important, indication that the potential born of the union of Mimi's eye and Fiore's image will not be realized is Mimi's move back to his hometown in the South. This change of place is significant in several ways for both Mimi and Fiore. First, the reason for the move is a mysterious piece of paper from Mimi's boss. Thus, the impulse to move does not come from either Mimi's or Fiore's desire. It comes invisibly from on high and does not take either individual into account. It is an arbitrary command that shows us that the unseen abstract powers hold sway over the individual. Moreover, the order also stipulates that Mimi be a foreman. He is, then, becoming more closely associated with the powers of the hierarchy, the "bosses." Finally, Fiore goes south with Mimi as his mistress. She has assumed a role in relation to him; hence their relationship moves toward institutionalization and abstraction.

The consequences of the move are seen immediately in the images which follow. Mimi, Fiore, and their son arrive in Catania via a closed car. They are presented

within the frame as a family unit: mother, father, and child. Furthermore, their individuality is almost totally hidden by the clothing they are wearing. They are all dressed in black and are wearing sunglasses, even the child. Fiore's head is draped in a traditional black, woman's headcovering. As images, they are obscured and concealed within the closed car and with their disguises. They do not want to be seen. They do not want to be recognized as individuals.

The consequence of Fiore's move to the South as Mimi's mistress is further seen by her confinement to an apartment, where she passively waits for him and by the pervasive shots of her as a mother figure with their son in the frame. She never again wears bright clothing, appears without her head covered, or is seen in joyous activity.

The consequences of Mimi's confrontation with Amalia show another facet of Mimi's move away from the powers of the image and toward the powers of the word. As described above Mimi has sex with Amalia upon returning to the South, motivated by his plan for revenge, not out of attraction to her as an individual. After their sexual intercourse, Amalia is happily singing and holding Mimi's head (the part of the body associated with abstraction and planning). But the intellect is not satisfied in the arms of the flesh. Mimi wants Amalia to know the "Truth." He cuts short

her satisfaction by telling her that he made love to her only to wound her husband's honor by dishonoring her. He lied to her with his body as well as with his words, and he thinks he controls the experience with his mind. He tries to negate the fact that he just made love to Amalia with the rational weapon of the "Truth." And Amalia, after an outburst, is again seduced by the power of Mimi's words. She agrees to be Mimi's accomplice in order to revenge herself for her husband's infidelity. Now Mimi and Amalia are both motivated by the abstract concept of revenge.

Visually, this move toward abstraction between Mimi and Amalia is made apparent by the fact that in their following assignation they both arrive wearing sunglasses (an image that has been observed in the movie to indicate a desire not to be seen and which also has the effect of blocking one's vision). Furthermore, they have sex with their clothes on (there is no revelation of flesh) according to a schedule that Amalia has written down on a piece of paper which tells when she is most likely to get pregnant. The concern is thus with the effect of their relation, not the living of it. They make love in their heads, not from their hearts.

Through Mimi's relationships with these three women, then, we can see both his potential for affirming himself as an individual and his failure to do so. In Rosalia's case the relationship is predicated upon an abstract social bond and does not move from there, although Rosalia does have the energy to break from the role once she is free of Mimi's dominion. With Fiore, the possibility of a new connection to the world is imaged, but eventually negated as the relationship with her degenerates into the traditional role of mistress and mother of son, and she is replaced in the frame by Amalia. Mimi's relationship with Amalia illustrates how far he has moved from the potential inherent in his visual connection with Fiore. His relationship with Amalia is totally self-negating and perversely abstract. The movement then is not toward greater wholeness, but is toward division and separation. Mimi becomes separated from his wife, from his mistress, and, finally, with Amalia, from himself. He acts against himself in order to serve his concept of honor.

Mimi is so obsessed with himself as a masculine identity that he is blind to the more flexible, individuated, concrete, and ever-changing possibilities that life offers him. As an image existing in a world of light, this persistent (and pernicious) preoccupation with an abstract concept (honor) constitutes a moral

weakness. He is in a state of moral and imaginative confusion because he does not take responsibility for himself as an individual living in a world of process and cannot make sense of his existence except through abstract social conventions and roles which support his concept of honor. Because he always locates value outside himself, instead of seeing himself in a unified living relation with it, he is unable to act out of the center of his own being. Because he looks to things outside himself to give meaning to his life, he is divided against himself. In his pursuit of the power of the words that should give his life meaning, words such as "honor," he fruitlessly asserts himself. He tries to dominate experience with his mind, with his plan, with his idea, and thus ends up acting as an agent for the powers of abstraction, for the unseen powers, unknowingly working all the time for the ever-present boss with the triangle of moles, the man on top. By the end of the movie he has become, in fact what he hates. He has joined the bosses.

Visually, Mimi takes on the garb of the mob, of the "killer," just as morally he has taken on the onus of his own dedication to an abstract idea with which to measure an individual's value. The story, from the point of Amalia's seduction by Mimi and his attendant visual defeat, moves consistently in the direction of closing things up, of getting even, of settling

accounts. These are all activities that signal an end, a stopping point, a closed system rather than a living process. They are oriented toward the past. Because Mimi is unable to live in the present moment and ignores concrete sensory experience, the very stuff of which life is made, he does not change or grow on a moral level and there is no way for him to be part of life's profoundest activity--creating the new. Instead, his mind dominates his eyes. He wants to remain in control of the situation as he understands it intellectually. He is in love with himself as a masculine identity, as a name to be protected. Finally, he ends up imprisoned by his sense of honor, both physically and morally. Physically, he is in jail, and morally he is imprisoned in a world of words. His only transformation is to become a bearer of the word himself. Thus, at the end of the movie he has become one of the men in black with the public address systems who go around enforcing the hierarchy and shouting slogans. He is a boss.

That the movement of the story is away from the power of the living, moving image and toward the stasis and abstraction of the word is also seen in the fact that as the movie progresses the human images are systematically deprived of color, movement, and vitality. All the women end up draped in black playing a role which is subservient to Mimi's. Mimi himself

takes on the uniform of the mob--slicked back hair, a self-important manner, a black suit, a black hat, and dark sunglasses. He has chosen the powers of hierarchical abstraction and the fault lies with him. Although he did not realize what master he was serving (the boss keeps telling him that he's "one of" them over his protestations), he must suffer the consequences.

The male powers and the female powers thus remain dissociated. Woman as image is dominated, subdued, and immobilized. Mimi has cut himself off from the possibility of a living relationship with each of the women.

The camera pulls away with Fiore and their son in a little three-wheeled truck, and for a moment Mimi is seen through Fiore's eyes as he falls to the ground in despair. She does not respond to his verbal plea, "Let me explain. It wasn't my fault. Don't leave me. Fioreeeeeee." She just looks at him and sees him clearly for what he is now, one of the mob. Her vision frees her, and, as the bearer of the powers of the image, she moves on. The words can't stop her self-generated visual activity. She moves out with the new Mimi, their son, and leaves the old Mimi behind.

But the possibility of Fiore moving out into the new is not followed through. Instead, the camera stops, zooms back in to center Mimi in the frame, and

freezes. Although the possibility of a new female-initiated vision is affirmed in the shot of Fiore's face and her eyes seeing Mimi clearly as he is, the camera stays with Mimi. Although introduced, the possibility of a new union between the female and the male is carried no further. Mimi remains alone, a tiny immobile figure trapped in the static abstraction of the freeze frame, and the male and the female powers remain dissociated. His seeing eye has been blinded by the consistent choice of the abstract over the concrete as a motive for his activity.

In The Seduction of Mimi then, the women are seen entirely in terms of their relationship to the male, the protagonist, Mimi. Rosalia is Mimi's wife, and his relationship with her is one which establishes them both primarily as social beings with social identities. She is his wife, his property, and she is violated. This is both the catalyst for Mimi's pursuit of revenge and the basis of his concept of honor. Mimi's interaction with Fiore, however, takes place outside of the world of his institutional ties, his social identity, and his past. He is a new man in the North, and with Fiore he temporarily perceives a new way of living based on a more concrete individual relation between the male and the female. They relate as image to image and individual to individual, with a greater degree of reciprocity and equality. His bond with her, born of

their initial visual encounter, is at first unmediated by hierarchical social institutions. Unfortunately, their relationship also falls prey to hierarchical social roles when she bears him a child and they move to Mimi's hometown in the South. The child places her in the role of mother, and the move places her in the role of mistress. Mimi insists on maintaining social forms and social identities at the cost of his and Fiore's individuality and his and Fiore's relationship. Finally, Mimi's compulsion to protect and maintain his masculine social identity, to assert his property rights as Rosalia's husband and to dishonor his rival, is perversely illustrated by his relentless pursuit and seduction of a woman he finds physically repulsive, Amalia. Thus, the women in this movie exist primarily as props to support Mimi's sense of masculine identity and are all subordinated to his obsessive quest for revenge. He maintains his identity at a steep price--his individuality, and theirs.

Notes

¹Denis de Rougemont, Love in the Western World, (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), p. 275.

²Brownmiller, Against Our Will, p. 376.

³Brownmiller, Against Our Will, p. 377.

⁴This quote and all others in the discussion of The Seduction of Mimi are from the sound track of The Seduction of Mimi, New Line Cinema, 1971.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SEPARATION OF THE WORLDS

The bodily complementarity of males and females, then, is for us something much more than a source of agreeable sensation. It can be a central manifestation of the human delight in existence . . . symbolizing and providing release for the whole of our erotic connectedness to the world.

The trouble is that this same bodily complementarity also works to maim us. Traditionally, it has carried with it a social and psychological complementarity, a division of responsibility for basic human concerns, a compartmentalization of sensibility that makes each sex in its own way sub-human. The sub-humanity of women is proverbially obvious. What is now surfacing is a venerable underground intuition: that the sub-humanity of men may in fact be more ominous.

Dorothy Dinnerstein

Mussolini has a pair of balls big enough to screw the world.

Spotoletti, from Love and Anarchy

In Love and Anarchy the dissociation resulting from the male-female dichotomy is more acute and the consequences are more grave than in The Seduction of Mimi. Tunin, the central human figure, fails to bridge the split created by the separation of the male world from the female world and is destroyed both as an individual and as an image. Tunin's story is told

through his relationships with two women, Salome and Tripolina: one light and one dark; one a relationship based upon dedication to a cause and one a relationship based upon love. Although Tunin verbally asserts, "I love you both,"¹ he is unable to carry through on this impulse to embrace and thus to integrate the two poles he finds himself torn between: love and anarchy, the personal and the political, the concrete and the abstract. Instead, he goes on a suicidal binge of abstraction. Although the impulse to establish a new moral relation between the two poles is present in Tunin's desire to break free of his past and to be a self-creating individual by performing an act that he thinks will free others (assassinating Mussolini), his ties to the past, his tendency toward abstraction, and the dichotomized world he finds himself in offer him little chance for achieving true individuality. In fact, Tunin, by allowing the abstract concept of woman as whore to dominate his perception of the individuals Salome and Tripolina at the most critical moment, is responsible for his own brutal death.

Two contrasting sequences clearly express this division between the male and female powers that leads Tunin into what Frank Burke has termed his "death by abstraction."² At the end of Tunin's first dinner at the bordello, near the beginning of the movie, Tunin's eye appreciates and individualizes the female images it

encounters. Tunin is the only male present. The women have drifted away from the table and are seated around the room listening to a young woman playing the guitar and singing. With the soft music in the background, the camera slowly pans around the room looking at each of the women. Each face is shot lovingly and is lingered upon. Each female image is affirmed in its own particular kind of beauty and individuality. Finally, Tunin's eye lingers on the image of Tripolina. She sees that he is looking at her and returns his look. He looks again. The cutting between their faces is repeated four times, and in the last series of cross cuts, the face of Salome is included in the series. Thus, visually, the three of them are placed in relation.

Tunin's conflict will be played out in terms of his relationships with these two women. The basis of his connection with Tripolina is their visual encounter, and the basis of his connection with Salome is their mutual dedication to the assassination of Mussolini. Tunin is pulled in both directions. One direction is shown by his attraction to the image of Tripolina and his ability to perceive the women as images and not stereotypically as whores. The other direction is shown by his attraction to the power of the word--his dedication to an intellectual cause which is shown by Salome's calling him from the table, and

the image of Tripolina, to the telephone for the conversation with Spotoletti. Thus, the power of the image in conflict with the power of the word is the source of conflict in the movie. Appropriately, then, this lyrical visual sequence is interrupted by Spotoletti, the Fascist head of Secret Police, calling Salome on the telephone. Tunin is called to go with her to attend to his masculine business, the business of the word, the business of the telephone conversation, the business of planning his heroic deed.

In the second sequence, on the other hand, his visual perception of the female image is critically distorted by his powers of abstraction. This disruption in his perception leads him out of the dimly-lit women-filled whorehouse and onto the brightly-lit soldier-filled street to his capture and subsequent obliteration.

When he awakens on the morning he was to have assassinated Mussolini and realizes that the hour is past and that Tripolina did not awaken him, he does not see Tripolina, his love, he sees Tripolina, a whore. He screams, "Whore! Traitor! Why didn't you wake me?" And when Salome enters the room, "Whore! Traitor! I'm worse off now than if I were dead. I'm nothing but vermin asleep in a whore's bed." He sees the women not as individuals who love him, care for him, and are trying to offer him life, but stereo-

typically, as whores. He is further blinded by his idea of performing the heroic deed of assassinating Mussolini and thus asserting his own masculine identity. (When earlier he is explaining to Salome his reasons for wanting to kill Mussolini he says that at home "even the chickens" laughed at him.) Furthermore, he accuses Salome and Tripolina of betraying him. He suddenly sees them, not only as low-class conniving women who have kept him from certain glory, but as evil women who have deceived him. The depth of his moral confusion is revealed when, as Salome is leaving the room, he grabs her and says, "Mamma, Sweetheart, don't leave me!"

At the center of Tunin's erratic behavior in this scene, is a fundamental ambiguity in his attitude toward women. He fears the power that they have over him and denies it for the power to act in the male world, to wield his gun, and to die attempting a heroic deed. He bolts from the room, downstairs to where Salome is detaining the detachment of soldiers to allow him time to escape with Tripolina, and begins wildly shooting. Out of bullets, he careens through the dark hallways of the house and bursts out into the light of the street.

Tunin's impulse to break free of woman, and therefore of the mother, in order to be born into the world of light is central to his moral conflict.

Paradoxically, this urge toward individuation involves both a successful union with the female powers and a breaking away from the female powers. That is, this possibility of a new, more vital connection with his world involves an acceptance of the totality of his life and experience, of his own individuality existing in a life-affirming relation with the world in which he exists, a world of process, of change, of motion. The power that makes this possible is the power of vision, more specifically, a visual imagination. For this reason it is significant that Tunin's visual perception of Salome and Tripolina is interrupted by the abstraction of "Whore!" The abstraction introduces a divisive force in this crucial interaction between Tunin, Salome, and Tripolina, and Tunin is unable to act powerfully or effectively in concert with his world. Instead, he excites himself with his words and erratically veers from one pole to another, from, "Mama, don't leave me," to, "You're both nothing but whores to me," or from his abrupt hugging of both Tripolina and Salome and his verbal assertion, "I love you both," to his casting Tripolina aside once Salome has left the room, grabbing the pistol, and suicidally and inappropriately attacking the soldiers who are there for a routine inspection.

Tunin's divided nature is reflected further in the ambiguity that he expresses toward Salome and Tripolina

in the previously described sequence. As whores, Tripolina and Salome represent woman as flesh. Simone deBeauvoir describes the myth of woman as flesh thus: "...the flesh of the male is produced in the mother's body and recreated in the embrace of the woman in love"³ (hence the connection between the mother and the whore). Woman as flesh then is associated with the beginning of life; at the same time she is a constant reminder of man's mortality and his limitation. The fact that in his maddened frenzy Tunin calls Salome and Tripolina whores reflects his carnal ambivalence toward them and his desire for transcendence. His desire for them is in conflict with his desire to prove himself as an independent masculine identity. DeBeauvoir describes the ambivalence that the male feels for the female as flesh:

But . . . man is in revolt against his carnal state; he sees himself as a fallen god: his curse is to be fallen from a bright and ordered heaven into the chaotic shadows of this mother's womb. This fire, this pure and active exhalation in which he likes to recognize himself, is imprisoned by woman in the mud of the earth. He would be inevitable, like a pure Idea, like the One, the All, the absolute Spirit; and he finds himself shut up in a body of limited powers, in a place and time he never chose, where he was not called for, useless, cumbersome, absurd.⁴

Tunin's birth, however, must occur through the agency of the female. As flesh she is most directly connected to life. Similarly, Salome functions as the

mediator for Tunin between the world of the bordello and the world outside. It is she who is his contact and who sets up the meeting with Spotoletti. It is she, in addition, who finds him a place to live, feeds him at the bordello, and tries to "mother" him out of the dangerous task of taking the body of the Commandant to the Forum. In fact, once Tunin enters the bordello he becomes completely dependent on Salome. He becomes so dependent, in fact, that on the morning of the assassination, the day he is to be a hero, he is not even responsible for waking himself up. He depends on Salome to awaken him at the appropriate hour to go shoot Mussolini. Also, in his frenzied actions after he does awaken, he cannot find his pistol; he must ask Salome, "Where's my pistol?" He is too upset to dress himself, and Tripolina must put his pants on for him. And when Salome proposes that he and Tripolina escape, it is her money that will help them get away.

The dissociation of the male and female powers is emphasized by the fact that the males have no power within the brothel and the females have no power outside the brothel. For example, Spotoletti and Tunin cannot get into the brothel the night they come home from the country. Also, when the soldiers come to the brothel the women have them under control until they get out into the street. Then the women lose their power and cannot help Tunin as he is dragged away by

the police. They stand in the crowd, held back by the police, helplessly stretching their arms out toward him.

That the movie is concerned with Tunin's growth and birth as an individual can further be seen by an examination of the first time his image is presented. Tunin's experiences in this scene and in the bordello present several parallels. Significantly, the first time Tunin is seen in the movie he is a small freckle-faced boy sitting on a chamber pot in a darkened room. He is illuminated by a slant of light from the adjoining room where his father and Michele are talking politics. Tunin asks, "Mother, what's an anarchist?" and she replies, "Someone who kills a king or a prince and gets hanged for it." As well as dramatically foreshadowing Tunin's end, the scene points out that even as a child Tunin was drawn to the powers of abstraction. Furthermore, he expresses his curiosity about the world verbally and is dependent on his mother to translate the male world for him, just as in the bordello he is dependent on Salome to translate the details of the anarchist plot to him. In addition, the world of the mother is dark and is associated with the physical needs of the child, just as the world of the bordello is dark and associated with the physical needs of the males there. Also, the room where the men talk politics is light, as the male-defined

world outside the bordello is light. Lastly, his mother ironically answers Tunin's question about anarchy and thus undercuts the male sense of importance that Tunin has recognized in the conversation of the two men. When, as a man, this word again fascinates him, he lives out his commitment to the abstraction in a house of women where the power of the word is again undercut by the female respect for life. As the comparison between the world of the mother and the world of the bordello shows, Tunin's story clearly can be seen to be the story of his impulse to grow and to establish himself in a new connection with his world. The female is seen as necessary to this task. Tunin's individuation, then, necessitates a successful integration of the male and female powers, or of the image and the word, the concrete and the abstract, the erotic and the aggressive. Unhappily, Tunin's vision is not up to this task.

The divided nature of the visual universe of the movie is emphasized in the sharply contrasted physical settings and major human images. The contrast between the whorehouse and the plaza where the Fascist rally is to be held provides a clear example of the dissociation of the male and female powers. The whorehouse is female-dominated. It is an interior space, dimly-lit, and is full of mysterious openings--doors, hallways, and rooms. In its dark

interior and female mysteriousness, it is suggestive of a womb. Moreover, it is the place where Tunin comes to hide and be taken care of before he is thrust out into the world of light on the day of the assassination, supposedly the day of his birth as a hero. Within the bordello, the powers of life are celebrated. It is, of course, a place dedicated to the life of the senses and is the scene of intimate physical relationships between individuals. Men come to the house to enter the body of the female, and it is therefore a place where the union of flesh between the male and female occurs. In the act of sex the two sexes are joined; it is an act which is based on an individual to individual relationship and a union of opposites.

The world outside the bordello, on the other hand, is male ruled. In contrast to the womb-like interior darkness of the brothel is the brightly-lit white geometric plaza where the rally for Mussolini is to be held. The human individuals appear insignificant when placed next to the large featureless buildings of the plaza. These futuristic hard-edged buildings create a public space to be used in a demonstration of a hierarchical political relationship. The plaza is the place where the celebration of male power, the Fascist rally, will be held. It remains an empty stage. The rally and the plot to kill Mussolini are supposedly the basis of Tunin's story, but the event never happens.

It remains an abstraction. Thus, the female world is associated with the private, the intimate, the mysterious, and the sensual, whereas the male world is associated with the public, the impersonal, the ordered, and the abstract.

The imagery of the movie is further dichotomized in the human images of Salome and Tripolina and Spotoletti and Tunin. Salome is a beautiful bawdy blonde with a hairdo "like Jean Harlow's." (The fact that she is compared to a movie star attests to her glamour and the power she wields as an image.) Salome is, furthermore, a powerful verbal opponent; her speech is rapid fire, and she uses this verbal weapon effectively. For example, when the other whores hear the commotion caused by Tripolina and Salome trying to subdue Tunin the morning of the failed assassination attempt, she is able to turn them away with a confident, "Can't we have a little family quarrel?" Her verbal expertise is further demonstrated by the ease with which she manipulates Spotoletti and elicits information about the rally from him. Tripolina, in contrast, is a petite, quiet, brunette. Whereas Salome is cynical and politically motivated in her relationships with the men in the movie, Tripolina is sentimental and is motivated by her passionate attachment to Tunin.

Like Salome, Spotoletti is blond, bawdy, and loud. He is, furthermore, active, powerful, and overbearing.

As befits a lieutenant of "Il Duce," his relationships with other individuals are based on dominance. In marked contrast to Spotoletti's dominance and confidence is Tunin's passivity. Like Tripolina, he is soft, dark, and quiet. With his freckled face and wide eyes he is not far removed from the freckle-faced boy of the opening scene. While Spotoletti is corrupt, Tunin is an innocent.

The conflict between opposites that Tunin fails to bridge, and that leads ultimately to his death, can perhaps be most clearly seen in Tunin's relationships with Salome and Tripolina. Visual and dramatic opposites, they embody the dichotomized nature of Tunin's moral predicament. Associated with Salome is his commitment to anarchy; associated with Tripolina is the possibility of love.

Tunin's relationship with Salome is begun as a result of his decision to avenge his friend Michele's death by taking on the task Michele had been about to perform, killing Mussolini. What brings Tunin to Salome, then, is his commitment to an intellectual, political cause. His relationship with her is the result of an abstract connection--he has been given her name by the Brighenti gang, Michele's revolutionary group. When he enters the brothel, he asks for her by name. He has never seen her; thus, their connection is a verbal one. When he does first see her, moreover,

she comes down the stairs with her face covered in goo and her hair in curlers. Her image is covered up and distorted and therefore subordinated to her function as an intellectual connection for Tunin. Furthermore, their initial encounter is characterized by the verbal barrage with which she greets him and which she uses to fool the other women who are watching into thinking that Tunin is her cousin. She is in this case disguising him with her verbal activity and creating an identity for him to use in his connection with her in the whorehouse. Once in her room Salome gives Tunin important verbal information concerning the plot they are involved in to kill Mussolini. The date is set. Their present connection is thus further abstracted by the fact that it is based on a future event and a preconceived plan and not on the physical present.

Evidence of Tunin's potential as a man of vision, however, is seen in the fact that their conversation and his dedication to the plot are not enough to completely suppress the impact of Salome's image on him. As Tunin utters the words, "Tyrants disgust me," his eyes linger on Salome's legs. He, however, denies what his eyes have communicated--that he is attracted to Salome's image when she matter-of-factly offers herself to him. This negation of his present physical perception is an indication of Tunin's moral weakness.

He repeatedly allows the verbal or abstract activity to dominate his experience.

Salome's image is powerful and enticing as she lies on her bed reflected in the mirror above. Although he makes excuses, he does not leave after all. He shyly and awkwardly moves toward her on the bed. Significantly, the camera cuts away before he has even touched the bed or started to undress. Their union is not a visual one, thus emphasizing the abstract nature of their relationship. Furthermore, the dominant activity after their lovemaking is conversation (verbal activity). In fact, although Tunin and Salome supposedly become lovers, they are never imaged even touching each other. After the lovemaking, Salome tells Tunin her story: why she became a whore and why she wants to kill Mussolini. She wants to avenge a lost love's brutal murder at the hands of the Fascists. Thus, Tunin and Salome both have the same motive for wanting to assassinate Mussolini: revenge. The motive for their action is based on the past, on an event that is already over. They are both disposed to remember, not to attend to life as it is happening now and to move on. In a world of process this signals an adherence to the old, a moral predisposition to see the present as an end, not as a part of a new life. Moreover, their method of activity causes them to submit themselves to an authority outside themselves. They

must follow the orders of the Brighenti gang; they must follow the plan. They are no longer acting as individuals living in the ever-changing physical universe, but have subordinated themselves to external abstract forces. From the beginning of their interaction then, the powers of abstraction are present and dominant in Salome and Tunin's relationship. Their relationship is based upon their partnership in dedication to a cause and is therefore based on intellectual and not visual values. The rational values they embrace only serve to emphasize the powers of dissociation inherent in their world.

Tunin's relationship with Tripolina, on the other hand, is born of the visual connection described in the discussion of the dinner table sequence near the beginning of the movie. He has no connection with her beyond his visual attraction to her image as she sits listening to the music. But the possibility envisioned in this quietly beautiful sequence of the women in the whorehouse is limited by the interruption of the telephone call as the activity which gets Tunin and Tripolina moving. Although Tunin and Tripolina are attracted to each other visually, this is not a strong enough catalyst to move them toward one another. They remain in separate frames and are only brought together through Salome's verbal activity. She sets up a date with Tripolina and Tunin and herself and Spotoletti.

In this way, the possibility of a relation based on visual values is undercut and subordinated to the verbal activity of the narrative.

This conflict in values is further evidenced in the scene when Tunin and Tripolina first make love. Their bodies are striped by the light coming in through the blinds, and in a similar manner Tunin's impulses are divided between the past and the present and the individual and the idea. When they first enter the room, Tunin reacts by remembering his mother. This upsets Tripolina, who would like to be the focus of Tunin's vision. More importantly, it makes her feel ashamed because Tunin's reference to his mother reminds her that she is a whore, the opposite of a "good" woman like his mother. Tunin, then, even in this intimate moment with Tripolina, demonstrates his implicit valuing of the past over the actual living present and his inability to perceive the individual woman clearly and unambiguously.

One final example is appropriate in documenting Tunin's failure of vision. This is the sequence when the whores open the house for business one morning and Tunin sees Tripolina, for the first time after he has fallen in love with her, working. Tunin's judging eye stops the action. It is a particularly vivid example, because this sequence is one of the most exuberant in the movie. The women are all coming down the stairs to

greet the men. They are bright-eyed, laughing, talking, and displaying their images for the males' approval. The camera clearly delights in the image that each woman offers. The atmosphere is charged with gaiety, energy, and movement. The room is filled with life as the men visually devour the images of the women and pair off with the woman who catches their eye. One woman looks girlish, with a petticoat, socks and shoes on; another looks cat-like with dark eyes and a smooth gliding walk; some women are plump, some are slim; they are all different and powerful as they display their images. Tripolina is particularly energized. She sparkles and her eyes flash as she presents herself to the men. She is unself-conscious and is enjoying herself until Tunin enters the room. When he looks at her, she freezes. The action stops dead as the camera leaves the lively images and follows Tunin upstairs, where he takes possession of Tripolina and tells her that she must only be his. He wants to dominate and control her display of her image. He wants to master the exuberant power of the female.⁵

Finally, although Tunin has shown some potential for affirming a living connection with his world through the powers of his seeing eye, his ties to the past, his tendency towards abstraction, and the dichotomized world in which he finds himself finally defeat him. Although he senses that he must be

liberated from visually discerned restrictions (i.e., the chicken coop where he is imaged when he sees Michele for the last time and the structure of the bordello itself), he does not perceive that he must also be liberated from his ideological preconceptions (i.e., his commitment to anarchy and his stereotypic perception of the female). Ironically, he pursues the very values that bring him to his death. He is unable to choose the image of the personal and the individual that Tripolina holds out to him, and instead puts himself in the hands of those who have much greater powers of abstraction than he. As an image and as an individual he is destroyed and deprived of his life.

Tunin's denial of Tripolina can also be viewed as a denial of his own female counterpart. For example, his name and Tripolina's both begin with "T." More significantly, as images and individuals they are very similar: soft, dark, quiet, and sentimental. Visually, it is appropriate that he stay inside the bordello. Salome, on the other hand, is representative of Tunin's impulse to be what he is not, to transcend himself. With her bloneness and strong verbal ability, Salome is aligned with the powers outside the brothel. Thus, the two impulses are constantly present: the impulse toward unity and the impulse toward separation or division. Salome and Tripolina as whores, one light and one dark, are fitting embodiments

of the moral dilemma that underlies Tunin's impulse toward individuation. As previously stated, woman as whore can be seen as woman as flesh. The mythic ambiguity arising from this perception of woman illustrates Tunin's predicament pointedly. Simone deBeauvoir describes this situation:

Man is frightened of this night, this reverse of fecundity, which threatens to swallow him up. He aspires to the sky, to the light, to the sunny summits, to the pure and crystalline frigidity of the blue sky; and under his feet there is a moist, warm, and darkling gulf ready to draw him down; in many a legend do we see the hero lost forever as he falls back into the maternal shadows--cave, abyss, hell.⁶

The predicament that man is placed in as a result of the duality of the sexual division is not solved in this movie, however. Tunin remains morally dissociated from his own individuality. His moral predisposition is to pursue his individuation through abstraction, through his dedication to the cause, to the plan. The assertion of the images' power of integration as presented by Salome and Tripolina is not acted upon. His imagination is not energized toward a more fully realized embodiment of life and love. He acts, instead, motivated by the memory of his friend Michele hanging Christ-like in a tree. He is committed to the past and he is committed to the future, but he is not committed to the present. Accordingly, he moves toward his birth as a masculine identity, not in the

unified organic manner born of a vital connection with the living present, but motivated by the abstraction of his perception of Salome and Tripolina as whores and of himself as a hero dedicated to a great cause. He chooses to be born a head, and his birth, then, is an unnatural one. It is a miscarriage. He blindly ejects himself from the brothel, shouting the slogan "Long live Anarchy!" He does not see himself engaged in a living relation with his world, but in fighting it for the life of his masculine identity. His eyes sightlessly wide in terror, he forgets everything he learned in seeing Tripolina as a valuable individual to be loved and Salome as a trusted friend. He rejects the personal and the individual and regresses to name calling and abstract labeling.

That the emphasis on the powers of the head, the intellect, result in Tunin's death is painfully demonstrated in the last sequence of the movie. Tunin never again sees Tripolina and Salome; the female images disappear from the movie and the possibility of a union of opposites represented by the female sexual powers (and the lower part of the body) vanishes. Tunin appears only as a silhouetted head in the questioning by Spotoletti. His face, his child-like freckles, are no longer visible. He is in the hands of the male powers, and he is obliterated by them. Moreover, Tunin's image is replaced by words being

tapped out on a typewriter that tell a verbal lie about the manner of his death. His actual death is never imaged; it, too, is abstract. Instead, a telephone call from the ultimate abstract figure of male dominance in the movie, "Il Duce," orders his death. Thereafter, four faceless men come to his cell and brutally beat him. They further deny his individuality by placing a bag over his head. Lastly, all human images disappear from the screen and a quotation by Malatesta⁷ rolls up over the empty cell. The words have replaced the image. The force of intellectual abstraction has been brought to bear upon the image. The consequence of the male limitation of vision and the resultant dissociation of the vital powers is the death of the individual and the disappearance of the image.⁸

In Love and Anarchy, then, the dissociation of the male and female powers has dire consequences. The image of woman is no longer visible at the end of the movie--nor is the image of man. The impulse of the male eye to dominate, control, and subdue the image, taken to its logical conclusion, leads to an absence of life itself. Tunin's inability to perceive the potential offered by the female image as a source of unity within his world leads him to his death.

Notes

¹This quote and all others in the discussion of Love and Anarchy are from the sound track. Cinema 5 1972.

²Frank Burke, "Death by Abstraction: A Discussion of The Opening Sequence and Tunin's Demise in Wertmuller's Love and Anarchy," in 1976 Film Studies Annual (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1976) pp. 225-32.

³Simone deBeauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. 218.

⁴The Second Sex, p. 164.

⁵Joseph Campbell, in his study of myth The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), comments on this desire of the male to dominate the female expression of her power:

In the very earliest ages of human history the magical force and wonder of the female was no less a marvel than the universe itself; and this gave to woman a prodigious power, which it has been one of the chief concerns of the masculine part of the population to break, control and employ for its own end.

⁶The Second Sex, p. 166-67.

⁷The quotation from Love and Anarchy is as follows:

I would like to stress again the horror I feel towards assassinations. Aside from being evil acts in themselves, they are foolish acts, for they harm the very cause they were to serve. However, these assassins could truly be regarded as saints as well as heroes, but only when their brutal actions and the passion that misled them are forgotten and the things remembered will be their martyrdom and the ideal that inspired them.

⁸Wertmuller does not allow the powers of vision to break free of the hegemony that the rational places over the individual cinematic image. Instead, she insists upon it by placing the quotation by Malatesta at the end of her movie, thus using it to justify the life of the images within her movie. Similarly, the opening sequence of abstract black and white photographs, featuring Mussolini's birth as a male identity and her opening of the narrative with lines of text in order to establish Tunin's urge toward action (He was a simple man, compelled to act. . . .") enclose the visual narrative from the beginning of the movie. Franke Burke's summary, in "Death by Abstraction," of the effect of this opening sequence is pertinent here:

More subtle and ultimately of even greater importance than Mussolini's ascendance is the process of abstraction--the gradual "deconcretizing" of Mussolini's image--that characterizes it. Abstraction is imaged as the fundamental (de-) formative power in the opening sequence and is thus established as the "villain" of Love and Anarchy--an inexorable force that destroys individuality, eliminates the possibility of free, creative action, and reduces the film's "hero," Tunin, to a "non-person" by the film's conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE

MAN AND WOMAN

Suffer women once to arrive at an equality with you, and they will from that moment become your superiors.

Cato the Elder, 195 B.C.

The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, and to make life sweet and agreeable to them--these are the duties of women at all times and what should be taught them from their infancy.

Jean Jacques Rosseau

In The Seduction of Mimi and Love and Anarchy the male-female relationship is subordinated to the male's quest for identity. In Swept Away and A Night Full of Rain, however, the issue of male identity gives way to a closer examination of the male-female relation. Wertmuller moves in for a look at the actual workings of the male-female relationship and for a closer examination of how the male's moral predisposition toward abstraction affects the relationship. In other words, the emphasis shifts from the male's relationship to his world and his drive toward individuation

(with the female as an accessory), to the male's relationship with the female as the focus of the story.

In Swept Away, the relationship takes place in a setting which is far removed from the male-defined personal and political institutions (marriage, the family, Communism, Fascism) which were seen in the previous chapters to overshadow and inhibit the relation. What remains to inhibit the relation are stereotypes based upon the sexual division itself. The stereotypes of the "natural" Man and Woman are laid open to view in this movie. The essential characteristic of the relation based on these stereotypes is seen to be the male's dominance of the female. This chapter examines the process of the relationship as it unfolds in the narrative. The stages of the relationship are 1) the visual encounter; 2) the domination of the female; 3) the visual union; and 4) the dissolution.

The outstanding fact concerning the female image in the opening sequence of Swept Away is her prominence. She is the central and active image in almost every scene. Visually and verbally, she is dominant. During this opening sequence, which takes place on a luxurious pleasure yacht in the Mediterranean, she swims; assertively argues politics with one of her male guests; complains about reheated coffee, overcooked pasta, unchilled wine, and peppery soup; sunbathes topless; makes the crew change their sweaty shirts

before serving dinner; and stays up all night drinking and gambling. The way that she acts and the attitudes she expresses in these opening scenes establish her as a "bitch." She is, in the words of one character, "the biggest bitch in the Mediterranean."

Rafaella is a bitch because she asserts herself. She acts like her peers' equal and her servants' superior. She acts, in short, like a man. She is aggressive, she is verbal, she speaks her mind, and she is immodest. She is a bitch because she doesn't act passively, submissively, and quietly like a woman should. She is a bitch, finally, because she doesn't acknowledge that she is in a subordinate gender class by acting subservient to the men. This fact intensifies her later submissiveness. Her behavior is anathema to Gennarrino Carrunchio, one of the crewmen on the yacht. He is a dark-haired, bearded man from the South (a region where women know their place) who alternately fumes and stares at the Signora and periodically goes below deck to exclaim to his fellow sailors, "Damn bitch. Listen to that bitch. Rich bitch, let me at her." When Gennarrino is complaining to his friend, another crewman named Pippo, about the women staying up all night gambling while the men go to sleep, Pippo asks him, "But what do you do at night when you go out?" "Drink and gamble," is Gennarrino's

reply. Subsequently, Rafaella is marooned on an island with this man.

Rafaella's behavior is difficult for a man like Gennarrino to accept. Doesn't she recognize what proper female behavior is? Can't her husband control her? Her behavior is against the natural order of things as he sees it, and later will show. A man is not meant to be in a position subordinate to a woman. And the fact that she is rich doubles the affront to the communist Gennarrino. If the woman were of his own class, he would be in a "naturally" dominant position. But Rafaella, because she is a rich man's wife, shares in her husband's status and wealth. Gennarrino, as a member of a lower class, cannot get at her because she is protected by her class status.

The fact, then, that this woman is initially in a dominant position over the male helps put into sharp focus the process of relationship between them once it commences. The male's traditional domination of the female is such an integral part of the human experience that it is often unacknowledged.¹ The female's initial position of dominance, then, has the effect of making the male's traditional position of dominance more visible.

As in the case of Mimi and Fiore, and Tunin and Tripolina, the relationship between Gennarrino and Rafaella begins with a look. He first looks at her in

reaction to her arguing politics with her male guest. He is motivated by words. He aggressively stares at her to communicate his displeasure at her ideas, not his pleasure in her image. She notices his look and his anger and says, "That's quite a look. If looks could kill, I'd be dead."² She recognizes that she is having an effect on him and recognizes his visual assertiveness. By acknowledging his look verbally, though, she defuses it. She does not answer in kind (with a look). Instead she uses her verbal powers to name it and thus to limit its effect. She maintains a position of dominance.

The next time he looks at her, his look is overtly sexual. He peers up over the hatch from below. He is looking at the women sunbathing with no tops on. Their bodies are smooth, slim, and tanned. One of the women is Rafaella. She turns from her stomach to her back and he sees her breast. Rafaella is unaware of him looking at her. He slowly lowers the hatch and disappears. In this case the visual connection is limited--it is one way, from the male to the female, and the female does not participate. Furthermore, shortly thereafter when Rafaella complains to Gennarrino about the coffee being served reheated, he is particularly insulted. (She can't talk to me like that. . . .") His eye is drawn to her image, and yet

he is held in an "unnatural" position of passivity because he is in a subordinate role.

The last time he looks at her on the yacht, however, she returns the look. It is nighttime and he is on deck singing, while the guests are below playing cards. She comes up on deck for some fresh air. She is standing by the hatch and the wind is blowing her golden-white hair slightly. She is back-lit and ringed with a glow against the night. She is shining and perfect. He looks at her. She looks back at him. Then, they each lower their eyes. There are no words spoken, and she goes back down below. In this visual interaction there are seeds of a positive relationship between the man and the woman. They see each other simply, as equals, with no words. They recognize each other as individuals without the mediating abstraction of their roles dividing them. This interaction is in marked contrast to the previous "looks" which were disrupted by the dichotomy between the visual and the verbal. This look is, in contrast, not distorted by her lording it over him verbally, or by him leering at her from below. It is a simple human recognition based on the visual connection. There is thus a tension revealed here in the first phase between her attractiveness as an image and his urge toward her and the divisiveness of the verbal and abstract barriers thrown up by their social identities.

The second phase of their relationship, the process of the domination and submission of the female, begins when they are lost together in the dinghy. Although they continue to act out their social roles and the pattern of action that began on the yacht, the social roles begin to deteriorate. At first their interaction consists of her haughtily giving him orders and him resentfully muttering under his breath, giving her dirty looks, and obeying. The fact that they are still both at opposite ends of the social scale is visually emphasized by her wearing black and him wearing white and by the fact that they each stay in separate ends of the dinghy. Now that they are adrift in the dinghy, however, the power balance begins to shift. Instead of social roles, the traditional sexual roles begin to be emphasized. For example, Gennarrino is able to fix the motor, catch a little fish with his bare hands, and stomach biting its head off and eating it raw. Rafaella, on the other hand, huddles in the bow of the dinghy, can't consider eating a part of the little raw fish and thoughtlessly throws it away, and finally cries when the sailboat goes by on the horizon without seeing them or hearing their calls for help. She reveals her helplessness and fear most completely in the scene where she awakens and Gennarrino is under water trying to rescue his knife. She thinks he has somehow left her there on the sea by herself. At first

she softly calls his name, then she panics and begins screaming. He is out of her sight, and she is afraid to be alone.

The transition to this second phase of their relationship, her submission, is complete when the next day they sight land. The rubber dinghy which was advertised to be unsinkable is punctured on the rocks--an indication that the rules of the social world that they've left don't apply to their present situation. Furthermore, Rafaella's first words to Gennarrino on the island are, "Help! Help!" Their positions are reversed. She is no longer on deck with him peering at her from below. The boat is gone, and their social distance is removed. He takes her in his arms and helps her up to his level on the rock. While they are on the island, Rafaella, as a woman with few survival skills and no class protection, is dependent on Gennarrino's help.

After he scouts the island, standing atop a high stone outcropping--while Rafaella, dressed in her stylish clothes, hat, and sunglasses peers up at him from below--he tells her that the island is deserted. Gennarrino quickly realizes the implications--class distinctions no longer apply. He rebels. From his position high on the rock he throws her bag down to her and tells her that she has "busted his balls" and that he's had enough. He says, "You bitch, who do you think

you are?" (Later, he will tell her who she is--a woman subordinate to a man.) He refuses to obey her order to look again for help on the island and goes off on his own. The social identities that have so far defined the male-female relation are now removed.

It is significant that in this scene Rafaella doesn't look for herself to see if there is anyone else on the island. She depends on the male. Not only are their positions reversed visually and dramatically from the opening sequences, but in this encounter Rafaella's omitting to look for herself sets the pattern for her relationship to Gennarrino on the island. She sees through his vision. Eventually she will see herself as he sees her, in relation to him, subordinate to him. Appropriately, then, she follows after him and calls him names, as he grins to himself with the knowledge of how helpless she is.

With the restraints of society removed, then, Gennarrino begins to assert himself as the "naturally" superior male. His superiority is based on the fact that he is physically stronger and more able; he can find food and kill it when necessary; and he can assault the female sexually. He, for example, is able to catch a succulent lobster with one dive into the lovely blue water, while she wades around poking in the shallows still encumbered by the duffle bag on her shoulder, her hat, sunglasses, and boat clothes. She

finds a sea urchin which she tentatively licks, but she doesn't know how to get the meat from it. Meanwhile, he has stripped down and made a little camp. He has scooped some sea salt from a limerock hollow, found a bottle and fresh water, started a fire and cooked his lobster, and made a little tray of palm fronds and bamboo. He is in his element. She is not. She awkwardly clambers around on the rocks in inappropriate clothing with a hurt ankle, periodically approaching him to beg for food. He refuses her, negligently tossing a fishbone to the side and throwing the rest of the lobster into the fire to burn. He fully realizes that he has the upper hand now, and he wants to pay her back for all the indignities he suffered as a servant on her boat and as a member of a lower class. She becomes the scapegoat, and by dominating her his male sense of identity is assuaged. This, then, is the relation between this man and this woman: She needs his help in order to survive and to get this help she must be submissive and obedient. Ironically, his stereotypic attitude eventually makes it impossible for him to choose to stay on the island with her in the dominant position that he has created for himself.

Gennarrino's domination of Rafaella is accomplished by his brutalization of her. When she meets one demand, he makes another. His desire to dominate her is never appeased. The climax is his wish to "be like

a god" for her. At first, for example, he is content to see how miserable she is and to flaunt his superior meal while she goes hungry. Shortly, however, he wants to dominate her more concretely. When in desperation she asks him if she may buy a piece of fish, he refuses. He says, "Now, listen, Woman...." as he lays out his ideas of how she should behave toward him. Clearly, his sense of dominance comes from the fact that he is the Man and she is the Woman. He does not see her as a fellow being; she represents for him an abstraction--Woman--as opposed to him--Man. The sexual division is, of course, the basis of sex role stereotypes. In order to fulfill her role of Woman (which she must do if she wants to eat), Gennarrino requires that she wash his pants, serve his food, and call him Signore Carrunchio.

By the next morning, his demands have escalated. Now he wants her to kiss his hand and to call him "Master." This demand is enforced by physical assault; when she refuses, he hits her. When he walks by, he kicks her. At one point, he grabs her by the hair, yanks her head back and screams into her face, "You're going to serve me and that's the way it always should be. The woman serves the man and not the other way around!" If all else fails, he will beat her into being the Woman to complement his Man.

Ironically, his domination of her based on sex role stereotypes on the island is equally as artificial and destructive as her domination of him based on class status was on the boat. Although Gennarrino's superior survival skills at first distinguish him from Rafaella in her lack of skills, his desire for dominance quickly outstrips the difference in their skill levels. Furthermore, there is no mutuality in this sexual pattern of dominance based on gender difference, just as there was no mutuality in the dominance of the upper class over the lower class. The abstraction of the societal divisions and the abstractions of the sex role stereotypes are equally as destructive to the individual. Ominously, (all too much like Mussolini) Gennarrino doesn't seem to know when to stop his drive toward dominance.

Gennarrino's brutalization of Rafaella culminates in a sexual assault. After this assault, she capitulates. She becomes, as he wishes, his "slave of love." Her submission is complete. She accedes and plays out the stereotype according to his wishes. This is the epitome of their dichotomization.

As she is washing the dishes his eyes begin to linger on her body. She feels his eyes and turns to look at him. She doesn't like what she sees there. Previously, Gennarrino was not allowed to look at her in a sexual way because she had the social protection

of her husband and her class. They were both defined by the abstractions of social roles which limited their individual interaction. Now, however, he is free to look at her any way he wants. Unfortunately, although he may be free of the restrictions that the social roles placed over his eyes and his actions, he is not free of the limitations that he places over his own eyes by insisting on the abstraction of the sex role. He sees her as Woman, and he holds her accountable for all his remembered wrongs. He is seeing her in his mind; he is not seeing her through his eyes.

He begins to remember the time on the boat when he saw the women without their tops and couldn't approach them. He says to Rafaella, "Show me your tits. I want to see your tits. Uncover yourself." She finally realizes the degree to which she is in his power. She makes a break for it. She throws a plate in his face and runs, and he takes off in pursuit. Although it is the sight of her that excites him, the image only triggers a memory of the women on the boat, and he pursues her with the memories of the boat foremost in his mind. He is not living in the present moment, nor is he seeing Rafaella. He is seeing her as she stands for something else. He screams at her, "You're going to pay! You're going to pay for everyone!" She is the scapegoat for all Gennarrino's remembered wrongs. She is Woman, she is Bitch, she is, ultimately, Whore and

it's all Her fault. She stands for everything that has threatened to swallow up his "I," his sense of masculine identity. She is everything that he cannot control, and she is "asking for it" through her unruly behavior. He must assert himself.

At the beginning of the chase she is fighting hard, running until her strength gives out, and trying to argue him out of it. But, by the end she has given up. He has overpowered her and she submits. However, he does not want her to submit. He wants to take her, and, even more importantly, he wants her to love him for it. He wants, in fact, to be worshipped:

It's not enough if you say yes. . . .
 You've got to fall in love! passionately
 in love with me. You're already a slave,
 but you've got to become a slave of love.
 . . . I've got to get under your skin,
 inside your head, into your heart, into
 your belly! . . . I've got to be a god
 for you!

And with this, Gennarrino runs off over a dune. The taking of Rafaella sexually thus is not the union of two individuals in an erotic relationship, but is symbolic of his domination and ownership of her.

Rape is the fundamental power in the male's dominance of the female. It is a perverse power. Whereas the act of sex should be a union of opposites distinguished by mutual exhilaration and reciprocity, the act of rape represents the ultimate point of the divisive abstraction of the sexes. In the act of sex

the individual should be affirmed; but in the act of rape, the individual is absolutely denied.

The rape sequence is thus the epitome of the dominance of the male in the struggle for power over the female. A rape is not a union. It is, instead, the ultimate dichotimization. When dichotomy is the basis of the interaction, union isn't possible. In order for unity to occur, the powers in opposition must be seen as a whole.

The solution to the problem of unity lies in the potential that the visual imagination offers. The energies brought forth by the image, the perception of the other as individual, and not as opposite, are those of affirmation. A visual field is naturally unified, and each individual is whole in relation to every other. The true union, then, between Gennarrino and Rafaella does not occur until the power of the verbal activity no longer dominates. Significantly, in the climax of the rape scene, for example, Gennarrino says that he wants to be the ultimate in abstraction for Rafaella--he wants to be "like a god." This is the culmination of the hierarchical power of the word.

The phase of dominance in their relationship is thus characterized by the dominance of the verbal activity and the dominance of Gennarrino as he wields the stereotype. One final example of the divisive effect of the verbal activity on the potential for union

between the male and female is appropriate here in order to contrast the love scene with the love scenes in the next phase of the relationship.

In the lovemaking which follows, shortly after the rape scene, Gennarrino's insistence on his position of male dominance and Rafaella's presenting herself as the "slave of love" clearly limit the potential for a true union between autonomous human beings. That is, they are still interacting as stereotypes, although they are making love and no longer fighting. It is nighttime. Their bodies are reflected in the firelight. She is lying on top of him with her back to him. In this position they can't see each other. Their position emphasizes that their union is not born of visual values. Furthermore, they are talking. Their legs are white against the darkness. She calls him "master," and he says: "I love it when you call me master. I'm on fire listening to you. Beg me for it. I love to hear you say it. My beautiful high-class whore, my mistress, my slave. . . ." Gennarrino thus is excited more by his power over her than by a delight in her body and her beauty. What he is embracing is the idea that she wants him and that she is submitting to him. Moreover, he wants the words, the verbal acknowledgement, and this attention to words limits the experience of his senses. He is making love through his head. He is abstracting, and is therefore

disconnected from the living process of the moment. Furthermore, he is defining the experience in contradictory and derogatory ways. At the end of the scene he rolls over on top of her and says, "You with the innocent face . . . Bitch . . . Ugly whore . . . I'm fucking you." The sexual union is thus not enough; he must announce his power over her and denigrate her verbally. He is excited by the words, and his words further indicate the depth of his ambivalence toward her as a woman.

The love scenes in the third phase of their relationship, the visual union, all take place in brilliant sunlight, in contrast to the previously described love scene, which takes place at night. The sequence opens with two individuals rising out of the center of the frame into the light from behind a dune. The figures are embracing and they are in motion.

Their visual birth from the center of the frame immediately reveals that they are in a new relation. No longer are they in positions of hierarchy, one above the other, as in the previous scene and as they have been dramatically throughout the movie. They now move together from the center of their world out into the light. They are not held up, blocked, distorted, or defined by abstract verbal activity. Instead, they are freely expressing themselves in visual activity. They

are in motion--appropriate in a world of living processes. Lastly, there is no justification for their cinematic birth. It is a self-generated act. The sequence begins with the miracle of its own birth, free of the rational constraints that would have the visual act explained.

This visual activity, furthermore, gives way to further visual activity. This scene is followed by several other shots which reveal Gennarrino and Rafaella's visual unity. They make love on the beach, in the water, in the sand, and finally their images come to rest completely nude, asleep on a sand dune. The variety of the positions and places where they make love attest to the power of imagination awakened by their wordless interaction.

In the morning Gennarrino awakens to find himself decorated with pink flowers. There are flowers all over his genitals, and there is one in his hair. He has his wish. Rafaella is worshipping his maleness. But she is worshipping it visually, with color and imagination, and not verbally. He smiles. There is a definite transformation both in him and in her. For example, their faces are smooth and relaxed, and they are smiling at one another instead of hurling insults. The quality of their interaction has been changed as a result of their union.

It is not entirely transformed, however. Although her attitude is submissive, it is not submissive enough for Gennarrino. When she teasingly calls him "Idiot," he slaps her and hastens to tell her that women are for relaxation after work and that's all. The re-entry of the words into their interaction is divisive. It causes conflict and brings forth Gennarrino's stereotypic vision of the female. His verbal message contradicts the previous visual images of their equality and reciprocity within the frame. So, although the union of the male and female is realized in this movie, it is an isolated fragment of the story. Whenever the word is present, the image is dominated, and as the image is dominated, so is Rafaella.

The scenes of this third phase of the relationship alternate between the scenes with words, where Gennarrino and Rafaella are divided and in conflict because of his insistence on dominance and verbalization, and the wordless, entirely visual scenes where they are unified in a new way. The last image of their union is of them sitting together on the side of a dune, intertwined in an embrace. They are in the lower right side of the frame, and they are both dressed in black. It is difficult to tell which individual is which. The camera pulls back and leaves them on the dune.

The end of the phase of unity is suggested in several details of this scene. For example, Gennarrino and Rafaella are no longer emerging out of the center of the frame, they are not in motion, and their images are dressed in black. Their motion has been stopped. They are no longer on the move exploring their world. In fact, their embrace in this frame inhibits their movement. They are out of balance within the frame and, furthermore, as the camera pulls away the individual images are not distinguishable. They are moving back into abstraction, to the dichotomized world of rational values--black and white.

So, the union does not last, does not grow. The birth of the image revealed by the union of the male and female is stopped and abstracted and verbal activity again dominates. This dramatic and visual divorce is signaled by the arrival of a boat which Gennarrino sees and signals over Rafaella's objections.

He is up in a tree gathering bird eggs, and she is on the beach below. He sees the boat. He looks at her. The camera zooms in to a close-up of her face, then zooms back to a close-up of his face. Back and forth four times the camera zooms and reveals their conflict about signaling the boat. In this visual interaction, which is a conflict, they are looking at each other closely for the last time. He goes down to meet her on the beach. For him, it is a moment of

truth.³ He wants proof of her love for him. He wants to have his male identity validated by her acknowledgement in terms of the world they have left. He wants to go back. Her playing Woman to his Man is not enough. The visual marriage, the experience of the island, is not enough. She asks him to accept the miracle of their rebirth and stay, but he will not. He wants intellectual certainty, not the life of the image and the individual in erotic attachment to its world. He signals the boat, and they are never together in the frame again.

The failure of their union, its dissolution, is most clearly shown in their telephone conversation and in Rafaella's ascent in the helicopter. Once they are off the island, the social distance between Rafaella and Gennarrino asserts itself immediately. In fact, the camera cuts abruptly from his signal fire to him on the boat talking to the captain about their stay on the island. Rafaella is not visible. Furthermore, when during the champagne celebration her husband provides on the rescue boat Gennarrino looks at her in a secret way as if to affirm their connection, she does not meet his eye. Back on shore he calls her from a telephone booth in a gas station. The telephone conversation emphasizes their distance from one another at this point. They are on separate sides of the street and

Gennarrino is behind the glass of a window, so his image is obscured and she cannot see him clearly. They are no longer connected by anything but words. He tells her that he realizes that she will not "shout out the truth" and that it doesn't matter. He wants only to return to the island with her. But it is, as Rafaella said on the island, aware of the consequence of living in a world of process, "A moment that will not come again." They have gone from being part of a unified visual field locked in an erotic embrace to being separate images in separate frames separated by distance and by glass, and socially, by class. Their interaction is verbal, distanced, and abstract, instead of erotic, intimate, and particular.

Their final interaction, which consists of her letter to him, and his desperately running down the pier after her helicopter, is even more removed. The piece of white paper propels him toward her, but the helicopter is already taking off. As he stands on the ground cursing and crying, she ascends with her husband in the helicopter, leaving Gennarrino a small isolated figure on the ground. The shot is from her point of view as the helicopter swings up and away. Like Fiore, she leaves the possibility of this particular relationship behind. Unlike Fiore, however, Rafaella leaves the frame vertically; she ascends with her husband. She moves silently and effortlessly back up into her social

position above Gennarrino, forever out of his reach. Defined by her position to the male by a society dichotomized on the basis of the sexual division, she assumes her husband's abstract status and power.

The pattern of dominance and submission thus exists both in the sexual hierarchy and in the male-defined hierarchical world that they return to and which Gennarrino never intellectually left. A man with less power than other men in this world is in the same position as a woman is in terms of the sexual hierarchy. More powerful men rule less powerful men, just as men in general rule women. Accordingly, Gennarrino is left on the ground, at the bottom of the hierarchy, crying "like a woman." Although one pattern of dominance and subordination is left behind, swept away, another, more basic is in its place. What are swept away are the social and class distinctions between individuals. What is revealed is the strength of the equally abstract sexual stereotypes which underlie them.

In Swept Away the victory of the verbally established order over the possibilities inherent in the living image results in a diminishment of the individual. Rafaella disappears into the sky. She finally becomes the abstraction that Gennarrino has seen her as from the beginning, and her image is not present for the rest of the movie. Gennarrino appears

in the last shot as a small ant-like figure against the huge scale of the ships in the harbour as he walks out of the frame with his wife. He is not, however, immobile--like Mimi, and is not dead and gone--like Tunin. He is moving, although he appears doomed to merely repeat a less colorful version of his relationship with Rafaella on the island with his wife. When he is reunited with her, he immediately begins slapping her and telling her what a "good wife" is and is not. And after an argument with her over his affair with Rafaella, he even calls her a bitch. ("One up there, and one down here".) Evidently, "they" are everywhere. If it is not one woman trying to challenge the supremacy of his male authority, it is another. (The power of the word to limit and define the activity of the image is perfectly illustrated by the fact that Gennarrino's repeated attempts to assert himself are called "being a man." On the other hand, Rafaella's passion for asserting herself is called "being a bitch".)

And as the women challenge Gennarrino, so the image continues to challenge the established authority of the word. In the overall movement of the story, the alternating emphasis upon the image and the word clearly shows this to be the primary cinematic concern. The power of the image of woman continually asserts the possibility of the life of the eye and threatens to

break through the established verbal order. Even more, a creative advance is made in that in this movie Wertmuller has successfully taken the story of the visual encounter between the male and female further than before. The union itself is imaged and a relationship based on visual values is begun by Gennarrino and Rafaella during the visual sequences on the island. The regenerative possibility, however, is not elaborated. Its story does not grow. The story of regeneration does not continue because of the failure of the male eye to perceive the female image without the distorting abstraction of the sexual stereotype. Accordingly, Rafaella and Gennarrino are not liberated from their rational pasts into a new story, but return to the harbour and the known qualities of their old lives.

Notes

¹The Second Sex, p. xxx.

²This quotation and all others in this discussion of Swept Away are from the sound track. Cinema 5, 1974.

³As Carolyn Porter and Paul Thomas point out in their review of the movie (Film Quarterly, Spring, 1976):

This is a key moment in the film; despite the peace and freedom from rancor we have by now seen in his face, he has to know, he needs reaffirmation--not physical but social--of his male identity. . . .

CHAPTER FOUR
HUSBAND AND WIFE

Even in the romantic comedies, love ends with a kiss, a blackout, marriage. But marriage . . . means children, sacrifice, humiliation, hell. There is no passageway between the two, between love and marriage. There is no sense of growth and progression.

Molly Haskell

Romeo and Juliet were a great couple because they were destined to die in the fifth act.

A Night Full of Rain

In the last shot of Swept Away, Gennarrino walks out of the frame with his wife, arguing over who will carry the suitcase. He has been on a grand adventure and experienced a grand passion, but now he has to go home. In fact, both Gennarrino and Rafaella go back to their spouses. And this is where the male and female are found in The End of the World in Our Usual Bed in a Night Full of Rain--at home, not in the extraordinary situation, but in the everyday situation--in their "usual bed." This movie focuses upon a romantic relationship which results in marriage--the romantic ideal of our contemporary notions of gender arrangements.

In each of the previous movies the possibility of a more creative and more complex relation between the male and female is visualized, but does not evolve. In each case the male drive toward identity supersedes the potential for union that the female offers. At the same time, in each of the preceding cases, love, seen as issuing from the initial visual encounter, is affirmed as the most moral, life-enhancing event.

What happens when this impulse born of the attraction of one individual for another is followed to its institutionalized conclusion? Like Fiore and Mimi, Tripolina and Tunin, and Rafaella and Gennarrino, Lizzie and Paolo's relationship begins with cinematic promise---with a visual encounter and a recognition and delight in each other's individuality as presented by their images. In spite of this promise, however, their marriage is a failure. The codification of the romantic relationship in marriage ultimately denies the life of their union.

The movie opens with a series of still photographs in black and white behind the credits. The montage includes a mixture of old family snapshots and contemporary journalistic photographs of war (a woman and a child, various members of a family smiling at the camera, buildings, souvenir snapshots, war bodies, women, crowds, a wrecked town). Then the camera is on

the move in a world of color panning up a vividly colorful piece of contemporary sculpture, an abstract of a human form.

The camera pulls back slowly down the darkened hallway of the apartment away from a rain-washed window. Thus, it backs away from the source of light and does not go forward to meet its subject. The direction of the story is literally backward--toward the past, from the light of the living present and into the abstraction of memory and (as with the photographs) an historical past.

The hallway, and the apartment, is dense with personal artifacts--family mementos, antiques, photographs, books, and paintings. The walls are of polished wood and the floor is laid with carpets. The camera continues slowly down the hallway into the interior of the apartment. It is moving to see the inside of the relationship, what goes on within the walls of the home, the structure that holds the marriage.

The first human image is of Lizzie's blonde hair cascading over her shoulder as she lifts her head from her arm on the back of the couch and turns her face toward the television set. When first seen, her hair is all golden motion and light. It is difficult to tell what it is, but the light and the color catch the camera's eye. The first instant that the hair is seen,

it is in soft focus, and it is incredibly beautiful. The eye expects to see the face of a goddess as she turns. But as she turns, the focus sharpens and her face is seen clearly and unexaggeratedly. She is beautiful, but she is human.

This partial description of the sequence reveals that the impulse of the movie is to emphasize visual forms. The various pictures, the sculpture, and Lizzie's watching television all attest to a regard for images and for human vision. Furthermore, the progression from a more traditional form (black and white photography) to the more contemporary forms of the abstract sculpture and the television demonstrates that the relationship between the past and the present is being explored. The position of primacy, however, given the black and white photographs and their use to "introduce" the movie, shows a reluctance to begin with the moving image, to affirm it as the subject, and to get on with it. The photographs, furthermore, locate the movie squarely in the tradition of the intellectual past. They are abstract (black and white) and still, and thus they deny the motion, color, and activity of the living creation. The montage is, lastly, a fragmented series of images used in order to convey an idea--the idea in this case being the sanctity and safety of the private world of the family as opposed to the danger of the public war-torn

world. The powers of the image, thus, are both affirmed and denied in these opening shots. There is a dissociation between the forms of the past and the forms of the present. Moreover, in their black and white-ness the photographs are divorced from the rest of the movie. The opening shots thus posit a condition of divorce at the beginning of the movie -- divorce of the past from the present, black and white from color, public from private, old from new.

After the camera eye's discovery and affirmation of the female image, the verbal powers enter the movie. The presence of the male is introduced through the voice of a male announcer on the television set. He is reporting disaster: "Where life once flourished, there is a wasteland. A world full of marvels is being destroyed."¹ But the image on the television set that is supposed to represent disaster, instead shows the wonder of the physical creation--a large, moving, curling wave of water. The words are thus at odds with the image. Although the disembodied voice announces death and destruction, what is imaged are the waters of life. The announcer says that too much rain is causing flooding; it is thus a "natural" disaster which threatens. These comments suggest man's fear of the overwhelming force of nature, its awesome and relentless power and beauty. Mythically this fear is similar to what the male fears in the female, her awesome,

uncontrollable, natural powers. DeBeavoir defines it thus:

. . . the Woman-Mother has a face of shadows: she is the chaos whence all have come and whither all must one day return; she is Nothingness. In the Night are confused together the multiple aspects of the world which daylight reveals. . . . In the deeps of the sea it is night: woman is the Mare tenebrarum, dreaded by navigators of old; it is night in the entrails of the earth. . . .²

In contrast, the male is associated with the rational, orderly powers of the word. As the announcer speaks, Lizzie looks at Paolo, but he does not return her look. He is typing furiously in a room adjoining the room she is in. He is not aware of her presence as an image, because he is not engaged in present perception. He is lost in the abstraction of the words he is creating on the typewriter, lost in his rational endeavor. His intellectual orientation is visually emphasized in that he is wearing thick glasses with black frames. That is, he has trouble with his vision. He must perceive the world through the mediating lens of his tendency toward abstraction.

This, then, is the state of the marriage. A situation of opposition and dissociation is in existence at the opening of the movie. There is a condition of unity imposed by the structure of the home, the structure of the marriage. But within the

structure, the opposites are not in a living relationship. The couple is confined within the intimacy of the home, and yet isolated from each other. They are engaged in separate activities in different rooms. The female is engaged in visual activity, and the male is engaged in verbal activity. There is no exchange between them, no interaction. The atmosphere is one of confinement and habit. The dissociation between them is further emphasized by the state of dissociation between the image and the word present on the television. The words deny the image. They seek to define, limit, predict, and control the elemental power of the image that threatens to break out into the world. Lastly, Lizzie has shown a desire for visual activity that is not satisfied. The male does not return her look; he is not even aware of it because his involvement in his intellectual activity blinds him to the presence of her image. This condition of dissociation in the opening sequence will be seen to be present in each of the three stages of the relationship: 1) the interaction generated by the visual encounter; 2) the courtship; and 3) the marriage.

The move from the present state of the marriage to the beginning of the relationship necessitates a return to the past; consequently, the movie becomes an enactment of the history of the relationship. The

impulse then, is to tell the history of the relationship in order to understand its present form. As a male member of the chorus of "friends" who is present, commenting on and observing Lizzie and Paolo throughout the movie, says, "I remember. . . ." the camera pans over the small, old Italian hillside town where Lizzie and Paolo met.

It focuses upon a religious procession which is underway. The first shot of the procession is the head of Christ (a statue), and the next is the face of the Virgin Mary (also a statue). The male-female order of relations is thus established. Mary follows Christ. The sex roles are clearly defined, with the women carrying certain statues and the men carrying others. The men and women are not mixed in their places in the procession; they are in separate lines. The sexual dichotomy is further revealed by the males being entirely dressed in white with hoods over their heads and holes for their eyes, and the females being entirely dressed in black. The human images are thus abstracted and subordinated to the statues they carry above them.

In contrast to the traditional dress of the men and women in the procession is the way Lizzie and Paolo and their friends are dressed. The men's clothing and the women's clothing are very similar. Lizzie is wearing pants, a tan trenchcoat, and a man's hat; Paolo is

wearing pants, a tan car coat, and a sweater. The sex of these modern people is not visually defined by their clothing. The contemporary is thus differentiated from the traditional. That is, as images Lizzie and Paolo are aligned with the new. Their images alone place their values in conflict with the traditional values represented by religion and history in the procession. Furthermore, as bearers of the possibility of the new, they come to see, not to worship.

Paolo's eye is caught by Lizzie's image among the crowd of spectators. Her face fills the frame in profile. He looks at her. She feels his eyes and turns to look at him. He winks. She looks back briefly and then looks away with a little smile. He smiles. Contact has been made. This is the visual encounter. They stand out for each other as images. They are each the foremost image in the other's field of vision. Everything else in the scene (and in the movie) then becomes centered upon these two human images. This is love; the delight of the eye is front and center. From this visual connection their relationship will emerge.

Immediately following Lizzie and Paolo's visual encounter is a confrontation between a traditional husband and wife, a couple from the town. Lizzie and Paolo's attraction for one another is thus juxtaposed

by the couple's altercation. Suddenly, a man dressed in white from the procession breaks rank and shouts an order to a female in the crowd. She yells back and does not do what he asks. He repeats his command and, with a tilt of her chin, she again refuses. She is a disobedient wife. She is not in the procession and she is apparently out on the street by herself enjoying the celebration. This is not appropriate behavior for the traditional wife. The male, enraged at her refusal to obey him, leaves his place in the procession and goes after her. He pulls his hood from his head, revealing his individuality, and grabs her.

In disobeying, this woman challenges the sex roles. In leaving the procession and taking off his hood, this man reveals his potential as an image. The old and the new are in conflict, and the roles are changing. The individuals are breaking out of the tradition, even in this old Southern Italian town. Then the young husband starts to slap his wife for her disobedience. When this image of traditional male dominance enters the eye of the new woman, Lizzie, (who is dressed very much like a man), she is moved to help the other woman. She rushes over and hits the man in the head with her bag and he falls to the ground. The man's women scowl at Lizzie.

The young husband gets up and, in turn, begins to beat Lizzie. When Paolo sees this he rushes to her

defense. He follows the connection his eye made a few moments ago. Pandemonium ensues and the procession breaks up and becomes a mass of swirling people. The statue of Christ falls, and the music changes from the stately religious music of the processional to a more comic and lively music that sounds like a circus.

Thus, the carefully divided lines in the procession, black and white, male and female, are disrupted. The traditional forms are broken and the mood changes from one of solemnity to hilarity. The impulse of the new to break out and destroy the old is present and ready to manifest itself at any moment, even during a celebration of the old order. Furthermore, it is seen that when the sexes come together, the potential for excitement and liveliness is heightened. The enforcement of the dichotomy, seen here in the processional, helps to control this impulse of the male and female to come together and to generate action. The powers of life in a condition of dissociation cannot produce the new which will shatter the old.

Lizzie and Paolo break free of the commotion of the disrupted procession and run off together. However, instead of generating more visual activity or seeing themselves in a new relation as a result of their visual interaction, they come to rest in an ancient monastery and regress into divisive verbal activity.

The monastery is a magnificent, opulent structure. It is, as well as being a physical relic from the past, a structure that dates from the time period of courtly love, the forerunner of romantic love.³ In the tradition of courtly love the woman is idealized. Courtly love, in fact, became so powerful a phenomenon that the Church sought to appropriate its worship of women for its own. The Church's answer to the heresy of the courtly lovers' idealization of Woman was the cult of the Virgin Mary:

In order to counter this powerful and almost universal rise of Love and the cult of the Idealized Woman, the Church and the clergy were bound to set up a belief and a worship which met the same profound desire, as this sprang up out of the communal spirit of the time. While the Church had to fall in with that desire, the church had also to "convert" it and lead it into the strong stream of orthodoxy. Hence the repeated attempts from the beginning of the twelfth century onwards to institute a worship of the Virgin.⁴

The worship of the Virgin Mary in the processional points to this traditional idealization of woman. Furthermore, while Lizzie and Paolo are in the monastery, Lizzie is characteristically situated on a high stairway or platform while Paolo stands at the bottom looking up at her as they talk. The modern couple thus flees from traditional beliefs and male-female distinctions but finds itself still surrounded by history, and romantic history at that.

Furthermore, by the time they leave the monastery, Paolo has broached the subject of love, discussed its origins in religion, compared the language of love to the language of religion, told Lizzie she is an angel, and tried to seduce her on an altar.⁵

Their motion, then, after they break free of the processional, is contained within the structure of the monastery, and while they are in the monastery their interaction is primarily verbal and is imaged by vertical hierarchies. At the end of the attempted seduction, after Paolo has called Lizzie "a sentimental little girl" who believes everything, and she has run away, it is clear that the verbal activity has undercut the visual connection established at the beginning of the sequence. The words get in the way of a possible and more human union.

These two sequences, then, the opening sequence with Lizzie and Paolo static, confined, and dissociated from one another, and this sequence of the processional and the visual encounter and flight to the monastery, show the difference between the present state of the marriage and its beginnings in the past. Most obvious is the difference in the quality of Lizzie and Paolo's visual relationship. In the opening sequence there is no interaction between male and female; however, in the second sequence there is mutual excitement and action generated by the visual encounter. What is

not as obvious are the similarities between the past and the present. Although the two sequences are supposedly demonstrating a contrast between then and now, in each case the couple is framed by the structure of the institution. In the opening sequence, it is the home. In the second sequence, it is the religious tradition of the procession and the historical past of the monastery. The relationship between the individuals is therefore dominated by hierarchical social forces outside of itself in both cases. Significantly, both the sequence in the present and the sequence in the past take place in the Old World. Although the new is present and exhibits an urge to break free of past forms (seen both in Lizzie and Paolo's breaking free of the procession and in the traditional couple's altercation based on a conflict between old ways and new ways), it is dominated and enclosed by the old forms. The couples remain dissociated.

The courtship phase of the relationship, in contrast, takes place entirely in the New World. This phase of the relationship is the most alive, sensual, and visual of the relationship. There is no external structure framing, confining, and limiting the possibilities of interaction and motion. Paolo and Lizzie are free of the inhibitive confines of the Old World and they are on the move in the New. That the images are

free of traditional rational restrictions is seen in that there is no explanation or justification for their appearing to each other. Miraculously, he runs into her in America. He is on his way up a stairway in a busy building, but he spots her in a small newsroom at the foot of the stairs. In the next split second she is in a close-up and he is next to her. The perception and the approach are almost instantaneous.

Moreover, they are involved in no elaborate ceremony, structure, or situation as a justification for their interaction. Nothing is placed in a position of supremacy over the image. Instead, the images form relations which the eye confirms as concrete, individual connections. The courtship phase is motivated entirely by his passion for visual interaction with her image. He is everywhere she is, demonstrating his desire to behold her. Her image gets him moving. She is in motion throughout this sequence, and he shows great persistence and ingenuity in miraculously appearing wherever she is. He is standing outside the building where she works. She exits. He follows. She takes a taxi; he's in the car beside her. She's on the trolley; he's driving alongside in his convertible. A taxi takes her home; he's on the street below her apartment.

He pursues her even to a disco where she has gone on a date. He sits and watches her dancing with a big

blond American like herself. His power is manifested through his looking at her. She feels his eyes on her and keeps looking back at him to see if he is still looking. Her attention is on him, and not on the man she is dancing with. His visual assertiveness works . . . she sees herself as an image in his eyes. Through the persistence and passion of his visual interaction with her, he wins her.

Later that night, watching her as she kisses her date in the car outside her apartment, Paolo is incited to action. He does not want to see the other male in physical possession of her. He has claimed her through the power of his look and by the fact that she returned his look. When he pulls her out of the car because he does not want her kissing the other man, she sides with him, not with her date. Finally, when he returns from jail to gaze longingly at her apartment after his fight with the other man, she seems to feel his presence, to feel his look. She comes out into the rain to meet him and they look silently into one another's eyes. This is the end of the segment of the movie where the visual powers are most active. At this point the camera cuts directly to Lizzie picking up her child's room.

The movie thus proceeds from the courtship between Lizzie and Paolo directly to Lizzie in her role as mother and in her house as wife. In short, from the visual attraction comes the impulse to possess, to codify and institutionalize the relationship. It happens in the flash of an eye, during the cut--attraction, pursuit, and suddenly, Lizzie is found in her child's room picking up toys and clothes. Furthermore, the immediate presence of the child suggests the importance of the child in the codification of the male-female relationship. The point is not the marriage itself and not the passionate love between the individuals. The point is the child; the point is the family. Bronislaw Malinowski, in his study, Sex, Culture, and Myth, comments upon the emphasis being more upon children than upon the romantic relationship between two individuals in the marriage bond:

Love and marriage are closely associated in day-dreams and in fiction, in folklore and poetry, in the manners, morals, and institutions of every human community--but marriage is more than the happy ending of a successful courtship. . . . Marriage on the whole is rather a contract for the production and maintenance of children. . . .⁶

Furthermore, as stated earlier, the importance of the family rests in large part on the laws of patriarchial succession. The male and the female bond together in this institutionalized fashion to ensure the

"legitimacy" of their child. In addition, the division of sex roles and resultant stereotyping stems directly from the family structure. The family, then, provides the rationale and is the source of the gender arrangements which Lizzie and Paolo find themselves defined by. As they stand looking down at their sleeping child, they are shot through a haze of family photographs--they are seen through the history of the family.

Significantly, the child is a daughter. A move away from the male-defined traditional past is seen in this shift from the son as heir to the new female. She will not carry on the name of the father. This child, furthermore, is engaged in seeing what the male is all about. She shows a determined curiosity in the only active interaction the child and the father have in the movie (she is sleeping all through the argument and is not present in the flashbacks). She asks Paolo if she can see his "pistolino." He is shocked. What! Reveal himself to his child? When he refuses, she looks at him with a winning smile and says, "Please. . . ." At his second refusal she becomes insistent. "I wanna see it. I wanna see it!" The mother chides the father for being "uptight." "Go on, let her see it. Don't be so Italian." The mother wants her daughter to see the male, the father, as he truly is, not to mystify and surround the male with taboos and the unseen powers of

abstraction. She wants the daughter to be "new," not "Italian" and "old-fashioned." Paolo unwillingly opens his bathrobe a bit in the front, and his daughter peers in. Disappointment is on her face. "Marco's is bigger," she says, to his shocked surprise. Thus, the new female exhibits a desire to see the source of the male power. The new challenges the old.

This conflict between the old and the new is also present in the lovemaking scene which ends the visualization of the courtship phase of the relationship. It is raining and Lizzie and Paolo are in a parked car. It is night, but Lizzie is full of light. Her hair is golden, and her face is glowing. Her shirt is halfway off, and one breast is visible. She takes off his glasses. "Ah, your eyes. Finally, I see your eyes. They're the color of the rain." They are seeing each other in a more intimate way. He is seeing her skin, and she is seeing his eyes, the source of his look, of his power over her. She reminds him of the time they met in Italy and how the husband was beating up the wife. She compares him to that man: "You did the same thing to me in a way. You beat me up. You came into my life with force." She likes his determined pursuit. Although she did not like what she saw in Italy and moved to defend the other woman, now she is making a favorable comparison of Paolo to that traditional husband. She responds to the traditional

male-female stereotype of dominating husband and submissive wife.

At the sight of her breast, he says, "I like big tits. How I could fall for two such little ones I don't know." In each of the phases of their relationship, the introduction, the courtship, and the marriage, he talks about "tits and ass," the female body as a stereotype, as a male ideal. In this case her breast only serves to remind him of his ideal of a woman's breasts. That is, he is responding not to the image of her particular breast; he is thinking of the ideal breast. She, in turn, is remembering the past. Neither is living or experiencing the present moment. Furthermore, in answer to her question, "How do I know you're not some fucking seducer?", he says: "You've got to stay. You've got to stay for love. Open your eyes and look at me. Even if I beat you, if I make a fool of you, if it's love you've got to stay." In spite of their strong desire for each other, then, in spite of their straightforward, carnal interest in each other as physical beings, they muddy the living experience of the moment and place their experience in an intellectual and stereotyped romantic framework. They, in fact, articulate the romantic idealization of the male-female relationship quite clearly. She is concerned with seeing a continuity between their past and their present, into weaving their relationship into

something that has meaning for her and being conscious of her position if she is seduced and then abandoned. She is also excited by the fact that he came into her life with force and took her, stole her away from another man, that he is so passionately interested in her. He, on the other hand, speaks of love and of "tits and ass" in the same breath. For him, love has two dimensions: sentiment and sex. There is the sentiment--the woman to be "worshipped" and won--and there is the female body. They are split in his mind. Neither views the individual as a total human being and neither sees the other as the naturally unified image that initially caught his/her eye. Lastly, Paolo speaks of love and defines it as an absolute bond for the female to the male based on the codification of the sentiment. If it's love, once the woman has been won, she is bound to the man, regardless of his behavior or the quality of his interaction with her. The relationship thus becomes a static bond; through the codification, the abstraction of love, it is removed from the world of process and therefore of change. During the passionate sequence, then, Lizzie has presented herself as an image to Paolo's eye. She wants to see and be seen. But his intellectuality is an interference to their clear visual interaction. (He is persistently shot through the glass of the car window, while she is not). During this lovemaking scene, she is revealed.

Her breast is visible, her skin is visible, and her passionate open face. He, on the other hand, is fully clothed. In fact, he appears to be wearing his trenchcoat.

The third, and final, stage of their relationship is the marriage itself. It is in marked contrast to the introduction and courtship phases. As previously mentioned, the cut goes directly from the courtship to married life ten years later. There is no visible ceremony, no honeymoon, no life without a child. The outcome of the successful courtship is thus the immediate presence of the family. The institutionalization of romantic love results in the social unit. Visually, Lizzie goes from a freely moving image active and at home in the New World, to being a confined wife and mother in Italy, the Old World. Paolo goes from being an agile pursuer and seducer, to being a husband of habit, preoccupied with his verbal activity.

The marriage reveals most completely the negative effects of the institutionalization of the relationship. All the scenes of the marriage take place within the apartment, with the exception of her brief flight and his pursuit in the rain. The marriage is defined by the structure that encloses it, and this structure is packed full of history--the history of the family in the numerous portraits and the history of the

civilization in the furnishings and artifacts. It is a secular version of the Church; it is a house of "love." Within this structure the male and female are confined with their offspring. The individuals are confined both by the structure that houses their marriage and by the history and tradition which defines it.

Moreover, the institutionalization of the relationship changes the pattern of the couple's interaction. Most importantly, Lizzie and Paolo no longer look at one another. At the beginning they are in opposite ends of the apartment in separate rooms and Paolo is unaware of her look. At the end their interaction is composed almost entirely of talking without looking at one another. They do not touch, they do not smile. They merely walk up and down the hallway in a repetitious pattern performing routine tasks, except when they are in bed. And when they are in bed, one always has his or her back turned toward the other. The sequence culminates, furthermore, in a verbal tirade fueled by the question of sexual ownership, the basis of the patriarchal bond of marriage.

The argument begins when Lizzie objects to Paolo's lovemaking. The other two times they've made love, during the seduction in the monastery and in the car in the rain, she has been excited by him, and he has been actively trying to excite her with his looks, his

words, and his caresses. In each of the previous cases, also, their interaction began with a visual connection. In this case, however, his eyes are closed and his caresses are perfunctory. He is lying stiffly on top of her and their faces are nose to nose. Only their heads are in the frame. The only discernible movement is of his nose moving slightly against hers. She stops him from making love to her. He doesn't understand. "What's this, novelty?" he asks. "Yes, exactly, that" she says. She wants the new, the fresh, the ever-changing. She does not want to be crushed in a stale, passionless matrimonial embrace, and novelty does not exist within the unchanging abstraction of the institutionalized relationship. Within the visual relation it is ever-present. But in this marriage, the visual connection is lost and the passion and life-enhancing energy gained from a vital and particular desire is gone. Consequently, their interaction becomes static, and their embrace becomes mechanical. When he asks what's wrong, Lizzie says, "Nothing. I just want to feel alive."

And that's what the conflict between Lizzie and Paolo is ultimately about--life--the life of the individuals' passion for one another and the life of the union they've chosen. Lizzie and Paolo are unified in that they are married, but this unity, paradoxically, divorces them from each other as lively

individuals and denies the life of their passionate urge toward union. Romantic love, codified in the bond of marriage, instead of enhancing the living unity of one individual drawn to another, exerts a divisive force because it is based in abstraction. In life, relations are internal, organic, and self-regulating. Unity is achieved on a cell-to-cell basis. It is not imposed from without through an abstract concept.

Paolo articulates the romantic ideal of love at first sight: "You are too beautiful. It is a provocation. . . . I love you. I love you. . . . You are an angel. . . . This is an incredible enchantment." It is as if he has been swept up in an overwhelming feeling. Actually, this feeling as articulated has little to do with her. She is not an angel, she is a woman.⁷ This, of course, is the ideal of "falling in love"--to transcend the everyday, to be lost in the contemplation of something perfect. But this idealization is detrimental to the individual. Human beings are not perfect. Furthermore, even if the passion is genuine, it is not a feeling which can be institutionalized.

When Lizzie says that she has taken a lover, she is rebelling against the basis of the bond itself--sexual ownership of the female by the male. Paolo explodes. "It is a clear intellectual fact that YOU ARE A FUCKING AMERICAN BITCH. NOW GET OUT OF MY HOUSE." He slaps

her and throws her around the room. He treats her the same way he objected to her being treated by the traditional husband in the opening sequence. At this moment, in fact, they look very much like the traditional husband and wife from the processional. She is even wearing black and he is wearing white. Although at the beginning of the movie Paolo and Lizzie saw themselves as much different than the traditional husband and wife, at this point it is apparent that they have become much like them. The power of the institution over the individuals is evident. Lizzie and Paolo have not lived up to the promise inherent in their initially breaking through the bonds of tradition and history represented by the processional. However, the impulse to try to break free is still there.

First Lizzie and then Paolo try to leave the apartment, the structure that houses their marriage. When she tries to leave, he blocks the door. When he tries to leave, she stands in front of the car and says that he will have to run her over. Ironically, though the impulse is to break free, neither will allow the other to leave. As Paolo said to her during their courtship, "If it's love, you've got to stay." The romantic ideal is stronger than their individual impulses to escape. They do, however, briefly run out of the apartment and into the street. It is nighttime

and it is pouring rain. She runs hysterically out into the city, wrapped in a blanket and dressed in her nightgown. (She is not dressed for the world outside.) He pursues her. Thus, they break out only to repeat the cycle their relationship began with--flight and pursuit.

Furthermore, there is nowhere for them to go in the world outside their apartment. The streets outside the apartment are featureless with rain, and it is not a gentle nor a promising rain. It is raining with a vengeance, and although Paolo is better dressed for the rain (he has on his trenchcoat and clothes), he too is battered and sopped by the time they return to the apartment. Thus, there are only two choices for Lizzie and Paolo at the end of the move: the rain-drenched streets or their cosy apartment. Grateful for the refuge, they go back inside the apartment, dry off, and go to bed. Their verbal storm has been spent, but the storm outside continues to rage.

They lie in bed, both facing the camera. The shot is of their heads and shoulders. Paolo is still wearing his glasses. Lizzie is in a white nightgown. She is lying behind him, but her head is above his and both of their faces are visible. She gently takes off his glasses, and, as she turns, she sees the female "friends" reflected in the mirror. For the first time in the movie she acknowledges their presence. She sees

them, and she smiles. The camera pans up and around the room, taking in once again the artifacts of their life together, the structure they inhabit. Then the camera returns to their faces once more as they lie there. She is holding him, but is behind him. They cannot see each other, but they are unified within the frame. They are both staring out into space beyond the camera with their eyes open. But the camera does not with stay them. It goes out the window and into the rain-drenched street where it is stopped in a freeze frame.

Thus, there is no breaking out into the new vision, in A Night Full of Rain. The marriage, dramatically, fails. Lizzie is leaving. The abstract, male-defined, institutional bond of marriage, the codification of the romantic relationship, is not a life-giving, nor a growth-promoting relationship. The codification contradicts the attraction between individuals that it is based on. Lizzie and Paolo are unified by the structure of the family, the romantic ideal of love which culminates in marriage, at the expense of their own potential for growth and change. Furthermore, they are unable to see beyond or to go beyond the structure they inhabit--the marriage, their home. Even Lizzie's desire to break free and begin a new life merely repeats a pattern already established--romantic flight and pursuit. (Maybe if I'm lucky you'll come for me in

another city, like a lover.") There is no imaginative advance in the relation between the male and the female.

Although the new is present and ready to break out--as seen for example in the possibility of the new individual in the presence of the child and in Lizzie's acknowledging the images of her imagination, the "friends," this potential is not realized. At the end of the movie, the camera, although it is briefly on the move and out of the confines of the apartment, is stopped by the static abstraction of the freeze frame. Similarly, Lizzie and Paolo, with their eyes open, centered within the frame in a embrace, are ready for a new vision. Nonetheless, they remain still, stuck--locked in a static embrace. Neither can let go. And there is no place for them to go imaged within the movie, outside of the structure of their marriage. The world outside is threatened with disaster--a flood. The couple returns to the refuge of their home to escape the deluge, perhaps to outwait, "The End of the World" in their "Usual Bed. . . ." In the ark of their house they will wait until the flood outside is over, then to emerge, perhaps, if they can learn to see each other clearly, into a new world.

Unlike Fiore and Mimi, Tunin and Tripolina, Gennarrino and Rafaella, then, Lizzie and Paolo stay together and follow the impulse toward union born of their visual encounter. The male's aspirations, in this case, do not lead him away from the mutual bond of the male-female relationship. Both Lizzie and Paolo are present at the end of the movie. But in this movie, the romantic idealization of the relationship itself and its codification in marriage is revealed to be as deleterious an abstraction as the stereotype of whore or the concept of male honor. The codification results in the deterioration of the relationship. It is no longer an active, living union. Lizzie and Paolo as husband and wife are limited by the abstractions born of gender arrangements as much as are Gennarrino and Rafaella as Man and Woman on the island. In the end, abstraction is valued over the perception of the individual as a fellow being.

The problem that Lizzie and Paolo confront--how to keep emotional life intact in the face of the destruction of the old forms and the creation of the new--is critical to the human endeavor. All of the couples in these movies prove incapable of creating and sustaining a fulfilling relationship with a member of the opposite sex. But this failure is more than the failure of marriage or of desire--it is indicative of a wider human failure to imagine oneself in a living, growing,

relation with one's fellow beings and one's world that is not distorted by this dichotomization at the heart of the human experience in these movies. The problem, as Shulamith Firestone has suggested, is ". . . the reintegration of the personal with the public, the subjective with the objective, the emotional with the rational--the female principle with the male."⁸ What this means, as Dorothy Dinnerstein vividly describes it, is:

. . . learning what it is to be intelligently, imaginatively, enterprising while riding fully alive on the ephemeral carnal moment; what it is to be purposefully, actively, engrossed in . . . event . . . while embedded fully alive in the demanding, lazy, pleasure-loving, inexorably aging flesh.⁹

A viable relationship between the organic and the abstract is necessary for the imaginative advance. A viable relationship between the male and the female is necessary for the advance of life itself. The study of this interaction therefore has a moral urgency. These four movies by Lina Wertmuller illustrate that a new kind of rapport must be forged between male and female, in order to bring forth, in order to create, a new moral life between them.

Notes

¹This quotation and all others in this discussion of A Night Full of Rain are from the sound track. Warner Brothers, 1977.

²The Second Sex, p. 166.

³For a discussion of courtly love, see Denis de Rougemont's Love in The Western World (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), page 7.

⁴Love in The Western World, p. 111.

⁵DeRougemont notes how romantic love has been virtually a religion since the medieval period:

. . . passionate love which the [romantic] myth celebrates actively became in the twelfth century--the moment when first it began to be cultivated--a religion in the full sense of the word, and in particular a Christian heresy historically determined (p. 137).

⁶Sex, Culture, and Myth (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962), p. 4.

⁷Shulamith Firestone in The Dialectic of Sex (New York: Bantam, 1971) asserts that the male's "falling in love" "...is no more than the process of alteration of male vision--through idealization, mystification, glorification--that renders void the woman's class inferiority" (p. 132).

⁸The Dialectic of Sex, p. 210.

⁹Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and The Minotaur, (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 273.

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- 1963 I Basilischi (The Lizards)
- 1965 Questa volta parliano di uomini (This Time Let's Talk About Men)
- 1971 Mimi metallurgico ferito nell'onore (Mimi, Metalworker, Wounded in Honor)
The Seduction of Mimi
- 1972 Film d'amore e d'anarchia, ovvero Stamattina alle 10 in via de fiori nella nota casa di tolleranza (Film of Love and Anarchy, or At 10:00 This Morning on the Via dei Fiori in a Well-known Bordello)
Love and Anarchy
- 1973 Tutto a posto e niente in ordine (Everything's in Order But Nothing Works)
All Screwed Up
- 1974 Travolti da un insolito destino nell'azzurro mare d'agosto (Swept Away By An Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August)
Swept Away
- 1975 Pasqualino Settebellezze (Pasqualino Seven Beauties)
Seven Beauties
- 1977 The End of the World in Our Usual Bed in a Nightful of Rain
A Nightful of Rain

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

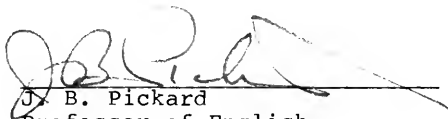
Suellyn Winkle was born in New York City. She became a Floridian when she was thirteen. She lives a quiet life in Williston, Florida, with her ducks, cats, dog, and Betamax. She likes to grow things.

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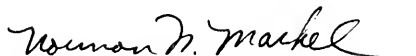
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